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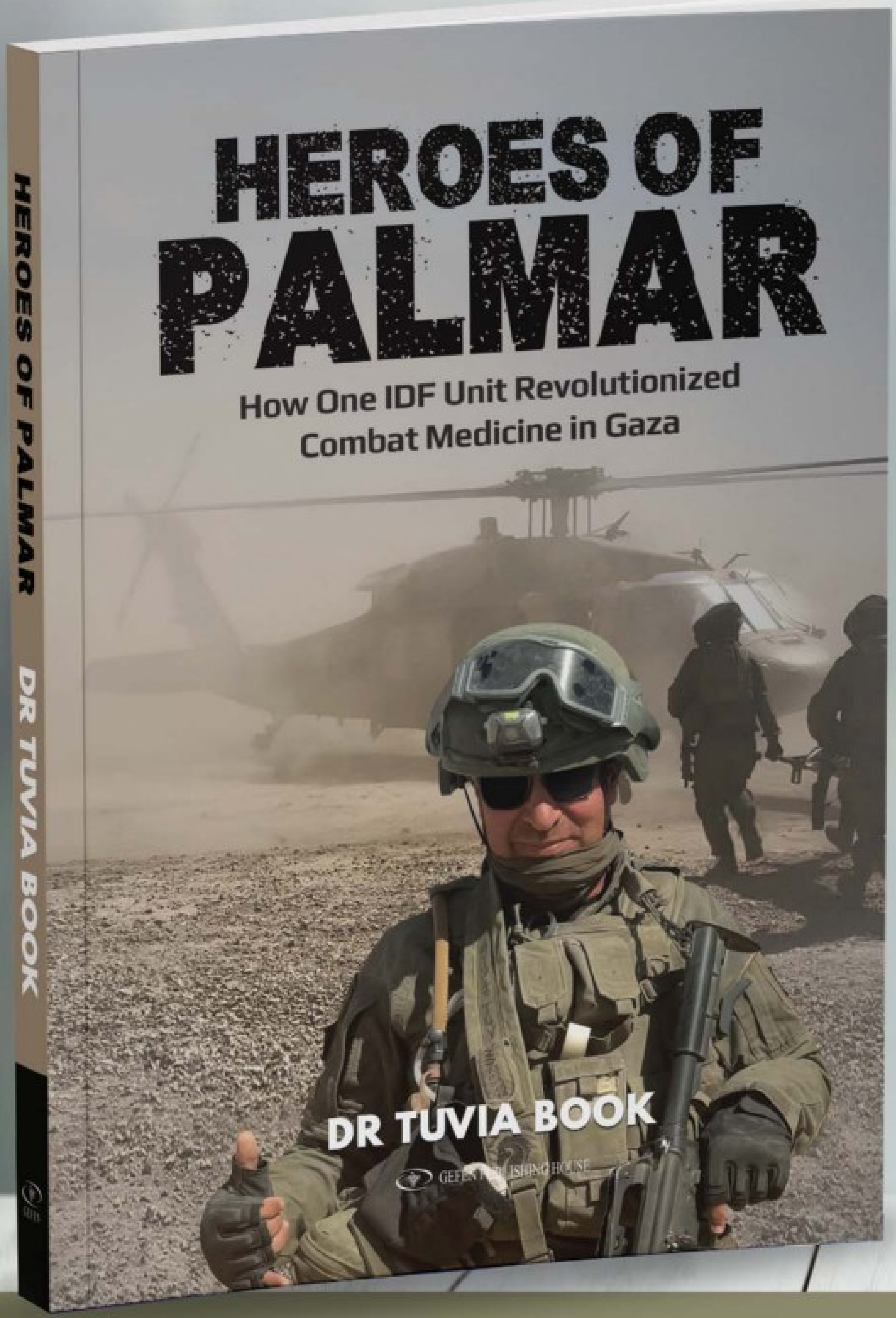
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FROM THE EDITOR

Battling antisemitism

SOME SAY that antisemitism is the world's oldest form of racism. No one can quantify if that is true or not, but the reality is the world has become a scary place for Jews since the Hamas-led massacres on October 7, 2023.

Whether you love Israel, support its government, or believe its actions in Gaza in this war are justified or not, Jews are prime targets of hate and antisemitic incidents, which are surging everywhere.

Attacks against Jews come in many guises. From Australia to Britain, France to the US and Canada, some have been deadly, while others more nuanced – Jews erased from certain industries, challenged about their views, or forced to hide their identities to stay safe.

In this edition of *The Jerusalem Report,* we look at the resurgence of this age-old hatred and hear from top professionals combating it.

For the cover story, David Harris, executive vice chair of the Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy (ISGAP), lays out how the organized Jewish world must view antisemitism as an extension of Israel's war.

The Jerusalem Post's editor-in-chief, Zvika Klein, asks why, after the billions spent on fighting antisemitism, this phenomenon is still growing. Kenneth Jacobson, deputy national director of the Anti-Defamation League, shares the latest data on the scourge.

Jeffrey Veidlinger, director of the Raoul Wallenberg Institute at the University of Michigan, argues it's time for US colleges to better distinguish between protected political protest and antisemitic intimidation or criminal conduct by employing clear legal standards

On a global level, Ben Cohen, director of Rapid Response at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies in Washington, looks at the pervasive blood libel being wielded against Jews in international institutions.

Israeli author and online activist Hen Mazzig, at the forefront of the digital fight to counter antisemitism, recounts his personal experiences, while *Report* staff writer Chani Kaplan tells about her first-hand experience monitoring online Jew-hatred.

Feature writer Lianne Kolirin sums up the relentless antisemitism in the United Kingdom and *The Post's* correspondent Mathilda Heller delves into the lives of British Jewish college students who have been abandoned by their institutions.

Feature writer Batsheva Shulman talks to South African Jews about what they've gone through since October 7, and Neville Teller explores the roots and validity of "intersectionality."

Egyptian dissident Dalia Ziada, a research fellow at ISGAP, writes about the rampant – and unchallenged – Jew-blaming in the Arab world.

The Post's Lara Sukster Mosheyof takes us back to an era of antisemitism through the eyes of Zevi Ghivelder – one of the few journalists still alive who covered Adolf Eichmann's 1961 trial.

Looking at the ongoing war, Eric R. Mandel writes about the role Syria could play in emerging diplomacy, and Israel's former deputy foreign minister, Danny Ayalon, and Moran Alaluf, a Middle East analyst, examine the diplomatic miscalculations by America vis-à-vis Iran. Feature writer Dana Ben-Shimon explains recent developments in Jordan, which recently brought back the death penalty.

Wrapping up the edition are two articles from students who participated in the "Art of Journalism" workshop at Reichman University's School of Communications: Ben Kauschansky explores the trend of Israelis moving to Germany 80 years after World War II, while Noa Jeifetz writes about integration challenges facing young olim.

It's another packed edition, putting the urgent issues facing the Jewish world and the Middle East into perspective.

– Ruth Marks Eglash

Send letters by email to: jerusalemreport@gmail.com Please include your full postal address. The editor reserves the right to edit letters as appropriate. Priority will be given to brief letters that relate to articles in the magazine.

Opening shot

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sits in the Knesset's plenum in Jerusalem on July 16, the last day of this coalition's term, ahead of the October 27 general election. Opinion polls point to a closely contested race after nearly three years of war and political upheaval.

ILIA YEFIMOVICH/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

14 DAYS

Compiled by
Chani Kaplan

ABOOD ABUSALAMA/MIDDLE EAST IMAGES/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Two Hamas terrorists stand guard as Red Cross vehicles arrive at the site of the handover of the bodies of four Israeli hostages in Khan Yunis, southern Gaza, on February 20, 2025.
—

HAMAS HUNT The IDF and Shin Bet (Israel Security Agency) killed three Hamas terrorists in a targeted strike in northern Gaza on July 21, including Abdallah Jahja, who participated in the October 7, 2023, massacre.

According to the military, Jahja served in Hamas's naval force and helped plan attacks against Israeli civilians and IDF troops. He was killed alongside Mohammed al-Hawari, a commander in Hamas's Zeitoun Battalion, and intelligence operative Sabhi Saqallah.

The strike followed the killing of two other Hamas operatives on July 18 who were involved in the October 7 attack.

Among them was Adham Ibrahim Sha'aban Nasman, a senior Gaza City Brigade commander who the military said helped lead the infiltration into Israel and later held several hostages, including Romi Gonen and Emily Damari.

Damari described Nasman's death as "another step on the path to justice," adding that those involved in the massacre and hostage-taking should not be left "unaccounted for."

SEARCH SUCCESS Four-year-old Yuval Kogan was found alive and in stable condition on July 24, more than 24 hours after disappearing from Hofit Beach in Ashkelon.

The boy was located on Nitzanim Beach by two riders on horseback who were taking part in a massive search operation involving hundreds of police officers, volunteers, rescue teams, helicopters, divers, and marine units.

Kogan had vanished while on a family picnic with his father and two sisters. Authorities searched by land, sea, and air from Ashkelon's northern coastline to Nitzanim.

His discovery prompted celebrations among search teams and family members. Before he was found, his mother, Dina Kogan, had appealed to the public for help, saying she feared her son may have been kidnapped.

MISSILE MEND Iran has rebuilt several missile and military sites damaged in US and Israeli strikes faster than previously expected, according to a *Wall Street Journal* report citing satellite imagery and Israeli officials.

Images reviewed by the newspaper reportedly show repaired tunnel entrances, roads, bridges, and partial reconstruction at military and missile-related facilities, including sites near Kangavar, Dezful, Kermanshah, and Bandar Anzali.

Former IDF air defense chief Brig.-Gen. Ran Kochav told the newspaper that Iran had "refilled their stockpiles," adding that Tehran has "very impressive industrialization and reconstruction capabilities."

The report said many Israeli and US strikes destroyed surface entrances to underground missile bases without eliminating the weapons stored inside, allowing Iran to restore access relatively quickly.

Separate satellite imagery also showed rebuilding at Raja Shimi Industries near Tehran, which is reportedly involved in missile-component production.

The report comes amid continued concern over Iran's ability to preserve and restore both missile and nuclear infrastructure.

DRONE DISCOVERY The IDF investigated after a small drone crashed in the Givat HaAvot neighborhood of Kiryat Arba, a settlement near Hebron on July 25, close to the neighborhood where National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir lives.

The military, which recovered the drone, determined it to be a child's toy belonging to an Israeli boy who lives near Ben-Gvir. No injuries were reported. An IDF source stressed that the drone was found in Ben-Gvir's neighborhood, not near his home.

The incident comes months after the Shin Bet and Israel Police announced the arrest of a Hebron-based cell suspected of plotting to assassinate Ben-Gvir using explosive drones. Investigators said the suspects allegedly received funding from Hamas operatives in Turkey, purchased two drones and related equipment, and intended to target the minister during a visit to Hebron's Cave of the Patriarchs before the plot was foiled.

SYNAGOGUE STABBING Two men, including one who was visibly Jewish, were stabbed outside an Orthodox synagogue in Manhattan on July 24, in what New York police are investigating as a possible hate crime.

Police arrested 51-year-old Raul Morales after the attacks, in which a 57-year-old man was stabbed in the back and a 50-year-old man in the chest. Both victims were reported in stable condition.

According to eyewitnesses cited by the Anti-Defamation League, the suspect shouted "Allahu Akbar" during the attack. New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani said the New York Police Department's initial investigation suggested mental health "may have been a factor," while authorities continue to examine whether the stabbings were hate crimes.

Israeli ambassador to the UN Danny Danon criticized Mamdani following the attack, accusing him of "fueling hatred" and urging him to "stop the incitement before more people get hurt."

HERITAGE HONOR Guatemala formally recognized Jerusalem's City of David and its archaeological heritage as part of the country's national inheritance during a ceremony on July 24.

A commemorative plaque signed by Guatemalan President Bernardo Arévalo was unveiled by Guatemala Ambassador Ava Atzum Arévalo Triboullier de Moscoso. Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar and US Ambassador Mike Huckabee also attended.

Guatemala is the third country to install a plaque at the City of David National Park, following the United States and Argentina.

The plaque, written in English and Spanish, highlights the historical ties between Guatemala and Israel, and describes the site as preserving the origins of Jerusalem's "millennia-old history."

"To honor the origins of Jerusalem is also to preserve an essential part of humanity's historical heritage," Arévalo de Moscoso said.

Guatemala relocated its embassy to Jerusalem in May 2018.

TORAH TENSIONS The Knesset passed the contentious haredi-backed Basic Law: Torah Study, on July 13, enshrining Torah study as a fundamental value in Israel's Basic Laws.

AMIR LEVY/GETTY IMAGES

Opposition leaders pledged to repeal the Basic Law: Torah Study, after the October 27 election, arguing it undermines the principle of equal national service.

The legislation passed its final readings by 63 votes to 52 after weeks of coalition tensions and pressure from haredi parties to advance the bill. It states that "Torah study is a fundamental value in the heritage of the Jewish people and in the State of Israel."

Critics warn the law could provide a basis for maintaining state benefits for yeshiva students who do not serve in the IDF, amid an ongoing military manpower shortage.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who supported the bill in its first reading, did not attend the final vote.

Opposition leaders vowed to repeal the law after the October 27 election, should they form a coalition government. Naftali Bennett, head of the Beyachad party, called its passage a "deliberate and conscious blow to the IDF," while Avigdor Liberman of Yisrael Beytenu said it "betrays IDF soldiers."

SCREENSHOT/X/GIDEON SAAR/SECTION27A

Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar with Lionel Aingimea, Nauru's deputy president and foreign affairs minister.

DIPLOMATIC DOORS Nauru will open an embassy in Jerusalem, becoming the 10th country to establish an embassy in Israel's capital.

The Pacific island nation announced the decision on July 22 following an understanding between Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar and Nauru's Deputy President and Foreign Minister Lionel Aingimea. The two met in Fiji last month during the opening of Israel's embassy there.

Nauru has been a consistent supporter of Israel at the United Nations and recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital in 2019. It also submitted an opinion supporting Israel in proceedings at the International Court of Justice in The Hague.

The announcement follows another diplomatic development last week, when Colombia's incoming foreign minister, Omar Bula Escobar, told Sa'ar that the country's incoming government intends to open an embassy in Jerusalem.

Israel and Colombia also agreed to restore diplomatic and economic relations, exchange ambassadors, abolish visa requirements, and expand Israeli development assistance.

America's October 7 reckoning

Israel transforms its security doctrine after Hamas's attack – American Jews must undergo an equally profound strategic awakening

By David Harris

ISRAEL WAS caught off guard on October 7, 2023. The prevailing strategic *conceptzia* (set of assumptions) – that Hamas neither intended nor was capable of launching a major attack from Gaza – proved catastrophically wrong. The result was the deadliest day for the Jewish people since the Holocaust.

Israel quickly developed a new *conceptzia* – a strategy for fighting simultaneously on seven fronts. A country deeply divided on October 6, recognizing the existential danger it faced, came together on October 8.

At the same time, antisemitism in the United States, home to the world's second-largest Jewish community after Israel, surged. Jews were murdered, terrorist acts were planned, Zionism and AIPAC – the American Israel Public Affairs Committee – were depicted as evil incarnate, Jewish-owned businesses were boycotted, synagogues experienced threatening mobs, and Jews on campuses were targeted.

The old assumptions

The surge in antisemitism also shattered a long-held American Jewish *conceptzia*: having faith in American exceptionalism and confidence that America was fundamentally different from any previous Diaspora experience.

But unlike Israel, and despite the laudable efforts of some, American Jews did not rush to a war footing, map out new strategies, allocate responsibilities, or display unity of purpose.

Instead, organizations largely responded independently, offering their own diagnoses and prescriptions, often disagreeing over both the causes of the crisis and the proper response.

The result has been a continued deterioration. American Jews have rarely been more anxious about their future. Too many once-trusted institutions and allies vanished after October 7, and too few Jewish leaders emerged to inspire the community beyond the boundaries of their own organizations.

> *Too many once-trusted institutions and allies vanished after October 7, and too few Jewish leaders emerged to inspire the community beyond the boundaries of their own organizations*

Indeed, had the American Jewish community been asked to organize an operation as complex as Operation Overlord, the invasion of Nazi-occupied France on June 6, 1944, it would likely have struggled for lack of vision, coordination, and unity.

It is late in the day – but not too late – to ask what comes next. Without decisive action, the trajectory is unmistakable: greater danger, deeper isolation, diminished influence, and fewer consequences for Jew-hatred – not to mention mounting risks to the unique

BRING HIM HOME NOW!
BRING HER

A Jewish student sits in front of posters of October 7 hostages at Columbia University.

US-Israel relationship and the fraying of the bipartisan consensus that has sustained it for decades.

What does a new American Jewish *conceptzia* look like?

A new strategy

First, a change in mindset. We are at war. I do not use the word lightly. If Israel faces seven kinetic fronts, American Jews are the eighth. The aim is nothing less than to marginalize the voice and place of American Jews and to drive a wedge between Washington

NIKITA PAYUSOV/MIDDLE EAST IMAGES VIA AFP

and Jerusalem. A war requires urgency, planning, mobilization, derring-do, adaptability, and common purpose.

Second, among the principal actors on this eighth front are younger Jews. They are likeliest to confront these challenges directly – in schools and universities, online, and in the workplace.

How prepared and well supported are they to stand proudly as Jews, master the facts, navigate difficult situations with confidence, and turn moments of tension into opportunities?

Third, applied research is needed to understand why a number of Jews are on the sidelines or, far worse, have joined groups and movements that demonize Zionism, delegitimize Israel, and minimize antisemitism.

Where did we go wrong? Was Jewish learning too often reduced to a handful of social justice slogans? Was Zionism neglected, relegated to a back seat, or treated as an annual celebration rather than a living component of Jewish identity?

We need answers – and we need corrective action. This is no time for hesitation, defensiveness, or more of the same.

Fourth, the majority of American Jews care deeply about their Jewish identity, connection to Israel, and concern for Jewish continuity.

This is precisely the time to intensify all three. Opportunities abound. Study Jewish texts. Learn Hebrew. Welcome Shabbat. Celebrate holidays. Travel to Israel. Connect with Israelis. Live Jewish. Act Jewish. Do Jewish.

Fifth, every hospital is committed to health care and every university to education, yet quality, specialization, and effectiveness vary enormously.

The same is true of Jewish organizations. In a time of war, members and donors should be asking hard questions about results, leadership, and measurable impact. Which organizations are truly moving the needle and deserve greater support? Which are generating meaningful outcomes rather than merely producing activity?

Defense to offense

Sixth, allies do exist, but they may not necessarily be the ones we thought of as our partners on October 6.

Rather than desperately seeking to reconnect with those missing in action, why not create a coalition of like-minded voices originally from the Middle East and now living in the United States – Iranians, Kurds, Christians, Jews, Muslims, Bahá'ís, and Yazidis – to educate Americans, including policymakers, about the realities of the Middle East and expose the myths that dominate today's discourse?

Why not help mobilize Americans en masse who care about the country to stand up to those who would divide society, weaponize antisemitism, embrace anti-American ideologies, or trample on the American flag?

Seventh, instead of constantly being on the defensive, trying to dissuade people from false claims of Israel's "genocide," "illegitimacy," or "settler-colonialism," let's go on offense.

What exactly are today's antisemites – however they label themselves – defending? Is it tyranny, terror, genocide, ethnic cleansing, misogyny, homophobia, jihadism, communism, or fascism? Expose them and their domestic and foreign networks, including the central role of Qatari money and Muslim Brotherhood ideology.

Eighth, it is high time to become far more sophisticated voters. Neither political party should any longer assume Jewish votes or support for granted. Both face internal debates that will shape America's future and the place of the Jewish community within it. Jewish votes and support matter. Candidates for office should never again take anything for granted from American Jews.

Ninth, American Jews helped create Silicon Valley, Hollywood, and Madison Avenue.

Are the best minds in technology, communications, storytelling, lawfare, and grassroots activism at the tables where today's strategic decisions need to be made for effective advocacy?

And 10th, Jews have contributed mightily to universities, cultural institutions, nongovernmental organizations, medicine, and countless other causes as an expression of love of country and a desire to live out their universalist values. Bravo! But some of those very same places abandoned us after October 7, or even before.

Denial is no strategy. Time to rethink philanthropy rather than allow ourselves to be played for *freiers*, that dreaded Israeli notion of being "a sucker."

American Jews arrived on the shores of what became the United States in 1654. That is 372 years ago. It has been an extraordinary journey. Today, however, a gathering storm threatens all that has been achieved. Will we summon the faith, footing, and fortitude to navigate it successfully? No question today could be more pressing. ■

David Harris is executive vice chair of the Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy (ISGAP), and author of Antisemitism: What Everyone Needs to Know (Oxford University Press, 2025).

Demonstrators wave flags on the Francis Scott Key Bridge during a rally in support of the Iranian people in Washington in May. Rather than desperately seeking to reconnect with those missing in action, why not create a coalition of like-minded voices originally from the Middle East and now living in the United States?

MAKE IRAN GREAT AGAIN
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EXECUTION ORDERS
NO
NAMES
NO

AMID FARAHI/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Israel is the trigger. Can it be the cure?

Protecting Jews worldwide requires more than good intentions – it demands a clearer Israeli strategy

By Zvika Klein

JOHN THYS/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Belgian military personnel armed with assault rifles stand guard outside a synagogue in central Antwerp as part of Belgium's reinforced security measures established at Jewish schools and synagogues, on March 23.

FOR A decade I kept a Google Alert on the word "antisemitic." Eventually I shut it off. Not because the hate stopped; my inbox couldn't take the volume anymore. Every swastika, every assault, every campus mob, landing in one man's email until the email broke.

In those same years, Israel built a machine to fight the thing that broke my inbox. The Foreign Ministry has a department for combating antisemitism. The Diaspora Affairs Ministry renamed itself the Ministry for Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism, in case anyone missed the point. The Prime Minister's Office runs its own initiatives. There is a special envoy. The Mossad keeps a file. The World Zionist Organization (WZO) has a department, the Jewish Agency has programs, and beneath them all an ecosystem of nonprofits, each insisting it is the address.

My favorite example is almost funny. In 2024, the government passed a worthy resolution recognizing Diaspora Jews murdered in antisemitic attacks as victims of hostile acts. To carry it out, Israel set up an interministerial committee: the Jewish Agency, the WZO, the Foreign Ministry, the PMO, and the National Security Council. Five bodies to honor the dead. How many does it take to protect the living?

We are spending billions on this fight. So let me ask what nobody asks from the conference stage: how's that working out for us? The WZO reports an eightfold increase in antisemitic incidents worldwide since October 7.

TOBY MELVILLE/REUTERS

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks argued that antisemitism continually adapts to new political and social realities, warning that, the hate that begins with Jews never ends with Jews.

A swastika on a Jewish school isn't news anymore. I have reporters whose entire beat is antisemitism, and I could hire 10 more tomorrow. If eight bodies shared responsibility for missile defense and interceptions collapsed like this, someone would have resigned by now.

And that's the easy problem. The harder one is that I'm not sure Israel can fight this fight at all.

The wrong messenger

Let's be honest about the past three years. Much of the hatred toward Jews didn't start that way. It started as hatred of Israel, of Gaza footage, of a war people watched on their phones, and then it crossed the line, from the Jewish state to the Jewish student, the Jewish school, the kosher restaurant.

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks warned a decade ago that antisemitism survives the way viruses do, by mutating. Jews were hated first for their religion, then for their race, now for their nation state.

The current strain arrived exactly as he predicted, wearing the language of human rights and insisting it has no problem with Jews, only with Israel. But here's the trap: when Israel is the accusation, Israel can't be the defense attorney. No press release from a Jerusalem ministry will persuade a 20-year-old whose entire picture of us is a war. The message might be right. The messenger was disqualified before he opened his mouth.

Zionism promised that a Jewish state would be the answer to antisemitism, not its case manager. And yet Israel can't stand aside, because Jews abroad are attacked in our name. The question was never whether Israel has a role, only which one.

Then there's what we discuss least: Israel and Diaspora interests aren't the same thing, and nowhere is the gap wider than Europe. Jerusalem courts right-wing and far-right parties, some with histories that include Nazi collaboration or worse.

Some have done real work confronting their pasts, purged their antisemites, and become reliable friends in Brussels and at the UN. Others just learned to hide it better. For the Foreign Ministry it's votes, vetoes, and arms deals, and that's legitimate.

A Jew in Vienna doesn't live inside Israel's UN arithmetic. He lives under the government Israel just legitimized. I'm not arguing Israel should refuse the support; a country in survival mode doesn't have that luxury, and some of these parties have earned a second look.

My argument is smaller and harder: when Jerusalem makes that calculation, it almost never asks the Jews who will live with the result.

Who leads?

So what is Israel's role? Things only a state can provide: intelligence on threats to Jewish communities, security funding, legal and diplomatic muscle, recognition for victims. Israel should do those superbly.

The public fight, in parliaments, on campuses, in city councils, has to be led by the communities themselves. They have the standing, the accents, and the passports Jerusalem lacks.

Israel's job is to arm them, not front them, and certainly not to elbow them aside with a dozen competing Israeli logos.

Which brings me to the next government, whoever forms it. Three commitments, one page.

One address. Antisemitism mutates; our bureaucracy multiplies. Fold the whole file into a single statutory National Authority for Combating Antisemitism. One accountable head, one consolidated budget, every scattered shekel routed through it, results published annually. We built exactly this for cyber. We can build it for Jews.

One division of labor. The state does what only a state can do: protection, intelligence, law. The communities lead the public battle, funded generously and directed by nobody in Jerusalem.

One conversation. The decision on whom Israel befriends stays in Jerusalem, and it should. But no embrace of a foreign party before sitting down, formally, with that country's Jewish community. Before the handshake, not after the headline. Consultation isn't a veto. It's the minimum owed to the people who live with the consequences.

There's a bigger version of that last idea, floated for years, though never for this reason: giving the Diaspora a formal voice in Jerusalem, an advisory council attached to the Knesset, or Knesset members representing Jewish communities by region.

France runs the model in reverse. French citizens living in Israel help elect their own deputy to the National Assembly, a seat held today by Caroline Yadan.

If a Jew in Netanya has a voice in Paris, a Jew in Paris can have a structured voice in Jerusalem. Not a vote on war and peace. A seat at the table on the one file that is about him.

Sacks left us one more warning: "The hate that begins with Jews never ends with Jews." He delivered that line to the European Parliament; I would hang it over the door of the next cabinet room. And here is my test for the government that sits there, cheaper than any of its dozen budgets: I want to turn that Google Alert back on. Not because the hate will have ended; Sacks taught us it only mutates. Because when it lands in my inbox, I'll finally know who's supposed to answer. ■

Zvika Klein is the editor-in-chief of The Jerusalem Post *, an Israeli-American journalist, columnist, speaker, and moderator covering Israel, the Jewish world, Diaspora affairs, antisemitism, and Israel-Diaspora relations. He previously served as the paper's Jewish World analyst and is recognized as one of the leading journalists covering Jewish communities worldwide.*

A man walks by graves vandalized with swastikas at the Jewish cemetery in Quatzenheim, France. Acts of vandalism against Jewish sites are among the most visible manifestations of rising antisemitism worldwide.

FREDERICK ERICK FLORIN/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

The leaders steering Israel Bonds through a historic moment

Jerusalem Post Staff

This article was written in cooperation with Israel Bonds.

AT A special Israel Bonds council meeting in New York City in May, senior leaders gathered to mark the organization's 75th anniversary and to celebrate the appointment of Laura Stein, a Los Angeles-based attorney, as chair of the National Campaign Advisory Council.

Stein succeeds Larry Olschwanger, a longstanding Dallas-based advocate who was instrumental in the organization's response following the devastating October 7, 2023, Hamas invasion.

COURTESY OF LAURA STEIN

Laura Stein, incoming chair of the Israel Bonds National Campaign Advisory Council.

Dani Naveh, the president and CEO of Israel Bonds, said, "Laura Stein is a role model of unconditional support for the State of Israel and its people."

He also thanked Olschwanger for his outstanding contribution to Israel Bonds.

"Our lay leaders play a decisive role in Israel Bonds campaigns – I am deeply grateful to Larry Olschwanger for his tireless dedication and the profound impact he made during one of the most consequential periods in Israel Bonds' history," Naveh said.

"I look forward to seeing Laura inspire new investors, new leaders, and new expressions of solidarity with Israel," he added.

Dr. Andrew M. Hutter, the chairman of the National and Inter-national Israel Bonds Board of Directors, said, "Laura Stein's election reflects both the strength and continuity of leadership within Israel Bonds at a pivotal moment in its 75-year history. Her deep commitment to the mission and proven record of service ensure that this next chapter will continue to strengthen the vital bond between the State of Israel and global investors. I have had the pleasure of working with Laura in her role as a board member in the past few years and I am excited about working with her in her new position."

Dr. Hutter went on to say: "I also want to express deep appreciation to Larry Olschwanger for his dedicated service and leadership as chair, particularly during a period marked by extraordinary challenges and significance for Israel Bonds and the State of Israel," Hutter said.

When passion turns into purpose

Olschwanger became involved with Israel Bonds after a formative first trip to Israel in 2010.

COURTESY LARRY OLSCHWANGER

Larry Olschwanger, of Dallas, outgoing chair of Israel Bonds National Campaign Advisory Council, whose leadership helped strengthen Israel's economic foundation over his tenure.

For someone who grew up in Dallas, where Jewish residents once made up just one percent of the population, stepping off the plane in Tel Aviv and seeing the Star of David emblazoned across the many stationed aircraft and terminal flags was enough to move him to tears.

"When I came back to Dallas, the people I was close with saw my passion toward Israel and encouraged me to get involved," Olschwanger said.

"I got started in a very small way on my local council, and the work just resonated with me."

"Israel Bonds is a unique organization because people aren't donating, they are investing," Olschwanger continued. "And they get a good return. It's the most impactful way to support the State of Israel."

Leading through crisis

Olschwanger was elected as the council chair in March 2023. His tenure was shaped almost immediately by the events of October 7, which prompted Israel Bonds to launch a sweeping emergency investment campaign unlike any other in the organization's history.

Within 30 days of October 7, after a sprint of daily calls, Zooms, and lay leader outreach, the organization generated over $1 billion globally for the State of Israel.

"It was a galvanizing campaign," Olschwanger said. "The economic cost to the country was tremendous; Israel essentially shut down, so it was the most fulfilling period of leadership I've had in any organization."

"Hopefully," he added, "we never face it again, but it was a unique opportunity to contribute to our beloved Israel."

Olschwanger was also among the first to travel to Israel on a solidarity delegation with Israel Bonds, visiting the grounds of Kibbutz Kfar Aza, the community whose residents were brutally attacked by terrorists, and the memorial site of the Nova music festival, where concert-goers were slaughtered.

Since October 7, Israel Bonds has raised more than $7.7 b. globally, bringing its total to over $57b. since its founding over 75 years ago.

A lifetime of pro-Israel advocacy

Stein, a Los Angeles native, brings to the role a distinguished professional record and decades of deep institutional involvement with Israel Bonds.

She is Of Counsel at Robbins Geller Rudman & Dowd LLP, where she has practiced securities class action litigation and asset recovery law for more than three decades.

Her relationship with Israel Bonds is as personal as it is professional. "When I was bat mitzvahed on Masada, my mother gave me my first Israel bond," she said.

"When my daughter was bat mitzvahed on Masada, we did the same thing. Israel Bonds has always been the most direct path to show my Zionism and support my ancestral homeland," Stein said.

Her leadership within Israel Bonds spans many years, including her service as chair of the Los Angeles Women's Division and the Israel Bonds Los Angeles Council and her service with distinction on the National Campaign Advisory Council.

Stein's broader communal footprint is equally expansive. She serves on the boards of StandWithUs, WIZO – Women's International Zionist Organization, the Greater Los Angeles Board of Directors for Jewish National Fund-USA, and Beat the Streets Los Angeles, among other important efforts.

To Stein, those commitments are not competing priorities.

"I see what Israel Bonds does as complementary and supportive of the work of every other organization I'm involved with," she said.

SHAHAR AZRAN

Larry Olschwanger at the memorial site of the Nova music festival on a solidarity delegation with Israel Bonds.

COURTESY OF LAURA STEIN

Laura Stein with her mother, z"l, on an early trip to Israel.

"It's about opportunity and education – once people understand the real impact of investing in Israel Bonds, they see that this is a very effective, efficient way to make a difference."

Cultivating new champions for Israel

Central to Stein's work ahead will be reactivating a community that has given enormously over the past few years but feels the fatigue of supporting Israel during a difficult period.

"We've all been through a lot," Stein said. "But I want our lay leaders to understand we still need them more so than ever."

The current network of geographically diverse lay leaders is also part of Olschwanger's legacy as national chair.

During his tenure, Israel Bonds expanded into cities with sizable Jewish populations, like Phoenix and Denver, that lacked local representation by the organization.

"I want to engage, reset, and encourage them to reach out to their networks to have conversations and create opportunities to talk about the real impact that Israel Bonds has," Stein said.

The significance of 75 years

Since its founding in 1951, Israel Bonds has pursued a single mission: To raise capital for Israel's economic development. The 75th anniversary arrives at a moment that underscores the urgency and the enduring relevance of that mission.

For Stein, the role carries a weight that is both historic and deeply personal. "I couldn't imagine a greater honor," she said.

"I feel like I'm filling the big shoes of my mother, who played such an active role in so many important Jewish organizations. I welcome this chance to make a real difference." ■

Development Corporation for Israel/Israel Bonds (DCI) is a broker-dealer that sells Israel bonds. The content in this article was prepared by DCI and The Jerusalem Post as part of a paid advertising campaign for DCI.

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A week inside the echo chamber

An inside look at the online ecosystem where antisemitic narratives spread at alarming speed

By Chani Kaplan

Public channels on the platform are among the online spaces researchers monitor for antisemitic content.
—

THE FIRST challenge wasn't finding online antisemitism. It was deciding where to look.

Before beginning this report, I contacted a child safety intelligence researcher to ask how researchers navigate extremist spaces. Their advice was straightforward: stay within publicly accessible platforms. Exploring the more extreme corners of the Internet, particularly the dark web, can raise legal and ethical questions depending on the material being accessed.

In truth, I wouldn't have known where to begin. Accessing the dark web requires software and technical knowledge well beyond an ordinary web browser.

So I stayed on the open Internet.

For seven days, I watched the conversations unfold.

Every few minutes, another thread appeared on 4chan's /pol/ board – an anonymous, politically incorrect, and highly volatile discussion subforum known for far-right politics and conspiracy theories.

On Telegram, one channel pushed a steady stream of posts praising Hitler, recycling Holocaust denial, quoting *Mein Kampf*, and blaming Jews for everything from global conflicts to social decline. The language quickly became familiar: “ZOG [Zionist Occupation Government],” “false flags,” vulgar slurs, “the Jew.” References to the Mossad surfaced across unrelated conversations, whether the subject was Jeffrey Epstein, the war in Gaza, or the latest tensions in the Middle East.

The conversations rarely stayed on one subject for long. Instead, they moved from one conspiracy theory to another, each reinforcing the same conclusion: Jews were responsible.

This was not the darkest corner of the Internet. Tal-Or Cohen Montemayor, founder and CEO of CyberWell, draws a distinction between mainstream social media platforms and the darker spaces she previously researched.

The darker spaces, she said, are “definitely more graphic and more violent.” But what has changed since October 7, she said, is the scale of open antisemitism on major platforms – and the way violent attacks against Jews are recorded, shared, and pushed into powerful engagement algorithms.

That shift is what CyberWell was built to monitor.

CyberWell describes itself as the first open database of online antisemitism. The nonprofit works directly with major social media platforms to help them enforce their own digital policies against hate speech, with a focus on antisemitism.

Its analysts use social listening tools to track developing antisemitic narratives, then evaluate the content through both the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism and the platforms' own trust-and-safety rules.

“We're not only looking at it from an antisemitism perspective,” Cohen Montemayor told *The Jerusalem Report*. “We actually look at it from the perspectives of the platforms themselves.

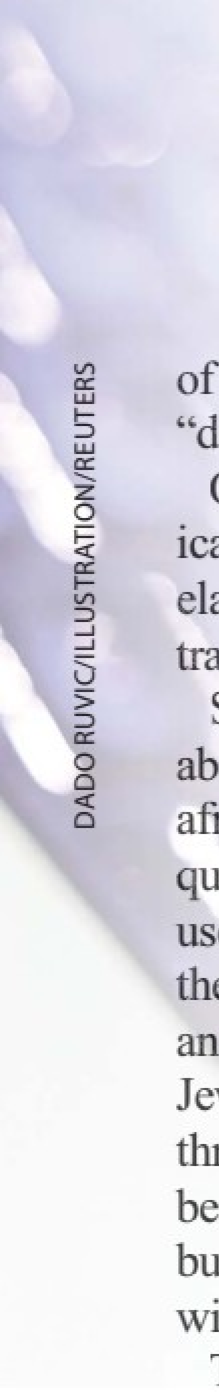
“The way that we work with platforms is we're trying to identify where the chinks in the armor of their enforcement system are,” Cohen Montemayor said. “What are the high-impact trends or analyses or examples that are going to help them enforce their policies more effectively at scale?”

Language of conspiracy

Within a day of monitoring public forums, certain patterns emerged.

The subject matter changed with the news cycle, but the conclusion rarely did.

One 4chan thread titled “F*** THE JEWS – GUIDE” opened with a list



DADO RUVIC/ILLUSTRATION/REUTERS

of actions users claimed would help "destroy Jews and Israel."

Other threads framed wars, geopolitical events, and international politics as elaborate "false flag" operations orchestrated by Jews.

Some discussions drifted into the absurd. One thread asked, "Are Jews afraid to shower?" The responses quickly turned to Holocaust denial, with users mocking survivors and inventing theories that gas chambers had created an "intergenerational trauma" that made Jews fearful of bathing. The claims throughout were baseless, but that was beside the point. The conversations were built less on evidence than on repetition, with each post reinforcing the next.

Telegram followed a different rhythm.

One broadcast channel with nearly 7,000 subscribers consisted almost entirely of antisemitic content. Posts praised Hitler, quoted *Mein Kampf*, and blamed Jews for major historical events. Members could not start discussions of their own, but they could respond to the administrator's posts, creating a steady stream of affirmation rather than debate.

According to a CyberWell analyst, the channel's administrator had already been removed from multiple platforms before resurfacing elsewhere.

That migration illustrates one of the central challenges facing online moderation.

Accounts disappear. Communities do not.

The moderation challenge

It is tempting to assume social media companies simply refuse to act. Cohen Montemayor argues the reality is more complicated.

"The policies and the platforms themselves are actually very similar, and they're really not bad," she said. "The issue is enforcement and the issue is enforcement at scale."

CyberWell has already pushed for concrete changes. After October 7, Meta updated its policies to clarify that "Zionist" can function as a proxy term for Jews when used to spread antisemitism.

Cohen Montemayor said that change followed consultation and data-sharing by CyberWell. TikTok also clarified that denial of the October 7 attacks is prohibited on its platform after CyberWell shared data about the trend.

But policy changes do not solve the entire problem.

Cohen Montemayor pointed to two areas that remain especially vulnerable: comment sections and engagement algorithms. Comment sections are where antisemitism often appears beneath unrelated posts. Engagement algorithms, meanwhile, can reinforce biases about Jews or Israel by rewarding outrage, anger, and disgust.

JIM WATSON/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Public online forums allow users to post anonymously, creating environments where extremist narratives can spread rapidly.

The challenge is no longer finding antisemitism online. It is keeping pace with the speed and flexibility of the ecosystem around it.

Beyond the fringe

Perhaps the most dangerous misconception is that online antisemitism exists only in extremist spaces.

Cohen Montemayor's concern is broader. In her view, online antisemitism has become one of the most common ways Jews encounter antisemitism at all. Citing American Jewish Committee statistics, she noted that one in five Jews reported feeling a lack of physical safety as a result of exposure to digital Jew-hatred. She also said that 45% of non-Jewish Americans reported seeing antisemitism in the past year, and that 70% of them saw it in digital spaces.

CyberWell's own tracking shows a shift from conspiracy into more explicit violence. Before October 7, Cohen Montemayor said, verified calls to violence and justifications of violence on mainstream platforms were below 10% of the content CyberWell monitored. After the attack, that figure moved into double digits. In CyberWell's 2025 verified dataset, she said, it stood at 15%.

The problem, she said, is not only one viral post or one violent account.

It is repeated exposure.

"The issue with online antisemitism is repeat exposure," Cohen Montemayor said. "That's how democratic societies become widely antisemitic because the threshold of what is considered acceptable treatment of Jews just goes up and up."

After seven days of watching these communities, one thing became clear: the greatest challenge wasn't finding antisemitism online. It was realizing how little effort it took to find it.

The darkest corners of the Internet may still exist, but many of the ideas that sustain them are no longer confined there.

They are only a few clicks away. ■

ANTI-
SEMITISM
KILLS!
IN LONDON

ALISHIA ABODUNDE/GETTY IMAGES

A protester holds a sign that reads 'Anti-Semitism Kills!' during the 'Britain Stands With British Jews' rally at Downing Street in May in London, England. Antisemitic incidents have risen dramatically against Jews globally and in the United States and violence has become once again part of Jewish life.

The new wave of antisemitic violence

A new global report reveals a sharp rise in antisemitic assaults, exposing a dangerous shift from prejudice to physical attacks

By Kenneth Jacobson

IN THE decades after the Holocaust, antisemitism did not disappear. But one of its manifestations, violence against Jews, was limited.

Across the major Jewish communities of the world, outside the Soviet Union, Jews lived with the knowledge that prejudice persisted yet did not feel they were under physical threat.

The largest factor in this dual reality was the impact of the Holocaust. While not sufficient to change attitudes that had existed for centuries, the shame of images of Auschwitz played a significant role in the easing of direct threats on Jews, including acts of violence.

The world we are living in the past few years looks starkly different. Antisemitic incidents have risen dramatically against Jews globally and in the United States. Attitudes towards Jews have deteriorated. And violence has become once again part of Jewish life.

Nowhere is this more starkly documented than in the second annual J7 Report, released just days ago.

The J7 is a task force that Anti-Defamation League (ADL) helped to form, comprised of organizations representing the seven largest Jewish communities in the diaspora, including Argentina, Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States.

In 2025 alone, 20 people were killed in antisemitic attacks globally – all in J7 countries. What makes the report particularly valuable is not any single country's data, but the picture it paints, including a side-by-side comparison that reveals how antisemitic violence compares across communities.

Last year alone, the statistics for Europe

In the decades after the Holocaust, the shame of images of Auschwitz played a significant role in the easing of direct threats on Jews, including acts of violence.

SHUTTERSTOCK

are alarming. In France, 126 antisemitic assaults were reported in 2025, along with 174 in the UK and 182 in Germany.

In comparison, in the US there were 203 physical assaults among the 6,000-plus total incidents reported in 2026, highlighting the sad reality that antisemitic incidents overall are among the highest in the years ADL has been monitoring them.

Seen together, the per capita disparity is striking: In 2025, the US, with an estimated Jewish population of 5.7 million, had 3.2 violent antisemitic incidents per 100,000 Jews; in Australia that number is 20.5; in France, 28.7; in the UK, 55.6; in Germany, 145.6.

These numbers occurred even though these countries took steps to deal with the rise in antisemitism, although these actions were clearly insufficient.

The policy challenge

The UK expended £25 million in emergency funding for Jewish community security and conducted an independent review into antisemitism in schools.

In France, President Emmanuel Macron called for stronger measures to combat antisemitism, and the government threw its support behind a new law criminalizing the call for destruction of a state recognized by France.

And in Germany, Chancellor Friedrich Merz declared a “war on antisemitism” and a state law tightened criminal laws against antisemitism and anti-Israel agitation.

In all these places, the very fact that Jews have been attacked in these numbers has produced a level of insecurity that hasn’t existed for some time.

The J7 data also point toward one particular outlier. One country with a significant Jewish population and a history of antisemitism, yet where the numbers are low, is Argentina. This is attributable in part to a favorable climate toward Jews in Argentinian society where the diversity of Jewish practice is embraced and even celebrated.

Argentina’s experience with two Iranian regime-backed bombings has raised awareness of terrorism; a prior government labeled Hezbollah as a terrorist organization, and most recently, under President Javier Milei, Hamas was also categorized as a terrorist entity.

In addition, Argentina is the only country in Latin America that has a special envoy on antisemitism and one of the few countries that actively prosecutes hate and antisemitic crimes.

The factors that have played into the increasing antisemitic threats against these largest Jewish communities start with the weakening of the impact of the Shoah as time passes. But many other factors come into play in this changing climate.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, the world’s leading state sponsor of terrorism and antisemitism, has played a central role not only in fueling toxic hate globally but also by funding and orchestrating violent attacks and antisemitic campaigns.

The weakening of the political center and the normalization of the extremes have provided the context for the rise in conspiracy theories which target and blame Jews. Jews are held responsible for COVID-19. Jews are responsible for war in the Middle East and high oil prices. Jews are even accused of controlling Congress and President Donald Trump.

Hatred without borders

On both sides of the political spectrum, blaming the Jews is in fashion. On the right is the xenophobic “Great Replacement Theory,” which posits that Jews are behind the surge in undocumented migration. And on the left, claims arise that Jews use their wealth to purchase support for Israel, a state accused of genocide.

Unlike in the past when these kinds of conspiracies needed to locate individuals and vehicles to disseminate, now the availability of social media and the internet makes it an easy find for people everywhere. Blaming Jews becomes not just the province of extremists but enters the realm of widespread discourse and normal conversation.

The fight against antisemitism requires countries to adopt and implement a whole-of-society strategy that involves all levels of government, corporations, academia, civil society, and the public. While no one action or policy can end antisemitism, we must urge governments, as well as international and non-governmental organizations, to adopt and implement the Global Guidelines for Countering Antisemitism.

In those countries around the world, including each one of the J7 governments, where the Global Guidelines have already been adopted by governments, there needs to be a focus on more robust implementation and enforcement to mitigate the threat and protect Jewish communities.

What governments do doesn’t always determine the level of antisemitism in a society, but it can have a major impact on the most egregious manifestation of antisemitism – violent assaults on the Jewish community.

Antisemitism has never defeated the Jewish people. But it has historically been allowed to fester when decision makers chose to look away. Now is the time for decision makers to recognize and act. ■

Kenneth Jacobson is deputy national director of the Anti-Defamation League.

When protests cross the line

When protest crosses into intimidation, universities need legal clarity – not endless debates over definitions

By Jeffrey Veidlinger

ON JUNE 6, the United States Department of Justice indicted eight individuals associated with the University of Michigan "for their alleged roles in conspiracies to threaten University of Michigan leaders, law enforcement, and businesses, including the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit."

According to the Department of Justice, over the past two years, "Seemingly prompted by their perception of the University of Michigan's and other victims' purported financial support of Israel, the conspirators insisted publicly that they 'must escalate, mobilize, and organize to demand divestment by any means necessary.'"

The indictment states: "Their criminal activity included spray painting threats, breaking windows, and throwing glass jars filled with noxious chemicals into family homes."

Like many other universities around the country, the University of Michigan, where I teach, has been roiled by protests since October, 2023. Although the vast majority of the protesters have been peaceful, the protest movement has also been characterized by isolated acts of vandalism and intimidation at the private homes and businesses of university leaders and by the use of rhetoric that can be interpreted as calls for violence.

After the federal indictment was announced and frightening details of the alleged campaign to intimidate university officials were revealed, it was easier to understand the tensions that pervaded campus for the last two years. Many social media posts compiled in the indictment included threatening phrases such as "you cannot hide," and accused campus leaders of complicity in genocide.

One might have expected the leaders of the protest movement to denounce these heinous acts and condemn those who had crossed the line, which they could have done while continuing to defend their right to peaceful and legal protest.

Instead, about two dozen protesters showed up at the federal courthouse to demonstrate their support for the indicted individuals and a coalition of campus organizations issued a "joint statement of solidarity" urging the authorities to drop the charges.

"The state is seeking to criminalize the struggle for divestment in any way possible," the statement asserts, "because the popular movement for Palestine is a threat to the neo-liberal order of the United States that relies on the support of the masses through compliance and indifference."

Beyond protest

It is one thing to challenge the specific charge of "conspiracy to commit threats in interstate and foreign commerce" and to oppose the federal government's targeting of legal protest in other instances. But they could have followed the example of a lawyer for the Council on American-Islamic Relations, who contested the specific charges while calling the text exchanges "reprehensible" and the vandalism "indefensible."

Each of the acts the defendants had been accused of made headlines and was duly noted by the ADL and other organizations that track antisemitic incidents on campuses. Even before these incidents, the ADL had awarded the university a grade of C in its "Antisemitism Report Card." And in March 2025, the US Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights had announced that the university was one of 60 schools in the United States under investigation for antisemitic discrimination and harassment.

The Office of Civil Rights, like many other organizations around the globe, uses the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's Working Definition of Antisemitism, a 2016 declaration that, despite the misgivings of its lead author, has been broadly embraced.

This definition, which vaguely defines antisemitism as "a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews," also provides several examples linking antisemitism to certain criticisms of Israel. None of these examples, though, would decisively address any of the recent disturbances at

NIC ANTAYA/GETTY IMAGES

Students demonstrate during a pro-Palestinian protest during the University of Michigan's spring commencement ceremony on May 4, 2024 at Michigan Stadium.

the University of Michigan.

After all, not all the victims of the vandalism were Jewish, even though Jewish community members with ties to Israel were disproportionately impacted.

Those, like me, deeply concerned with rising antisemitism should note that while antisemitism might be a motivating factor, charges of antisemitism are not always the best prism through which to combat these incidents. Those acts that are criminal – like vandalism – should appropriately be prosecuted through the criminal justice system. Those that specifically violate university regulations should be subjected to appropriate university procedures, and the culprits should be sanctioned, if warranted.

Rights and responsibilities

The real conundrum for those of us actively combating antisemitism is responding to the acts that do not actually constitute criminal activity or specifically violate existing university regulations: the banner that flew over the April 2024 encampment reading "Long Live the Intifada," or the professor whose university website reads "Free Palestine, from the River to the Sea."

Statements such as these may not be explicitly antisemitic – even according to the IHRA definition – but can and are often interpreted as intimidating and threatening.

These more difficult cases may instead fall under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which originally prohibited discrimination based on race, color, and national origin in federally funded programs and activities. Recent guidelines for interpreting Title VI have expanded enforcement to include discrimination and harassment of individuals based on actual or perceived shared ancestry or ethnic characteristics.

These new definitions of protected classes more clearly include Jews and can be effectively used to protect Israeli students or Jewish students with ties to Israel without getting into debates over the meaning of antisemitism.

In the words of a May 7, 2024 letter from the Department of Education, what matters is "whether the conduct was unwelcome, subjectively and objectively offensive, and so severe or pervasive that it created a hostile environment and whether the university took prompt and effective steps to end the harassment that created the hostile environment and prevent it from recurring."

The word "antisemitism" does not appear, and we need not determine whether the act was technically antisemitic to combat it.

In the case of the indicted individuals, it is enough to recognize that attacking the homes and property of individuals to intimidate them is a criminal activity that needs to be prosecuted.

The challenge facing us now is to ensure that these cases are adjudicated fairly, consistently, and uniformly – not something that can be taken for granted in the current environment. After all, the day after announcing it was opening the 60 investigations into violations of Title VI, the Department of Education laid off nearly half its staff.

A year later, US President Donald Trump announced his intention to eliminate the department altogether. These are precisely the institutions that we need to ensure the safety of all students on campus.

The challenge is to preserve freedom of speech while ensuring that protest does not create a hostile environment or outright discrimination against individuals of shared ancestry or ethnic characteristics.

As the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE) wrote in their statement on campus violence and arrests, "by acting decisively to defend protected speech while preventing violence, colleges and universities can preserve the safety and stability required for the discussion across differences they are uniquely equipped to facilitate." ■

Jeffrey Veidlinger is the director of the Raoul Wallenberg Institute, University of Michigan.

The UN's new blood libel

How accusations of genocide have become the latest expression of a centuries-old campaign to demonize the Jewish state

By Ben Cohen

FABRICE COFFRINI/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

HAUT-COMMISSAIRE
AUX DROITS DE L'HOMME

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk (R) looks on next to Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights Nada al-Nashif during a UN Human Rights Council debate over Israel's actions on September 16, 2025.

IN EARLY 1991, at a session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva, the Syrian delegate, Nabila Shaalan, delivered a blistering attack upon Israel during which she warmly recommended a book written by her country's defense minister.

The book, she enthused, "unmasked the racist character of Zionism." But this was no mere political critique.

Titled *The Matzah of Zion* and penned by one of the late Syrian dictator Hafez al-Assad's most loyal lieutenants, Mustafa Tlass, the book revisited the 1840 Damascus blood libel affair in which local Jews were accused of having murdered a Capuchin friar and his Muslim servant, using the priest's blood to prepare the unleavened bread which Jews consume during the annual Passover holiday.

Tlass's endorsement of the libel was yet another outing for a patently false allegation first leveled at Jews centuries earlier, when a 12-year-old boy named William was found dead outside the English city of Norwich, a myth that has persisted ever since.

"The Jew can kill you and take your blood in order to make his Zionist bread," Tlass wrote. Elsewhere in the text, he asserted that what happened in 1840 has been repeated many times in the 20th century when "the Zionists committed collective crimes in Palestine and in Lebanon that stirred the conscience of the noble ones throughout the world and were denounced by world opinion."

The fact that the blood libel was voiced in the halls of the United Nations, an organization created in the wake of the Nazi Holocaust, failed to move the UN bureaucracy. It took five months for the president of the Human Rights Commission to distance himself from Shaalan's remarks, and only then due to the relentless efforts of the US delegate, Ambassador Morris Abram.

A case built on distortion

Thirty-five years later, that same UN body – now rebranded as the Human Rights Council – has issued its own blood libel, charging Israel with committing macabre, outrageous, and outlandish crimes against Palestinian children, and aiming to stir "the conscience of the noble ones throughout the world" in much the same manner as Mustafa Tlass did.

On June 23, the Council published a report assembled by its so-called Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel. The press release accompanying the report left no doubt as to its thrust, declaring that "Israel continues to commit genocide and other atrocity crimes by deliberately targeting Palestinian children" in the headline.

The word "deliberately" is key here. According to the 1949 Genocide Convention, intentionality needs to be demonstrated for atrocities against a particular group to qualify as genocide. This report – the eighth to be released by the Commission, which was formed in 2021 and is headed and staffed by anti-Zionist ideologues with an annual budget of over $4 million – manifestly fails to prove that.

For example, it cites a statement by former IDF spokesperson R-Adm. Daniel Hagari, claiming Israel was now focused on causing "maximum damage" to Hamas' military capabilities. The report concludes that these remarks, together with Israeli operations, indicate "de facto blanket permission" to target civilian locations across Gaza.

Even if one takes Hagari's statement at face value, this is a grossly illogical interpretation, since he was clearly talking about defeating Hamas as a military organization, and not the civilian population in Gaza.

Yet tellingly, the report makes no mention of a subsequent statement from the IDF pointing out Hagari had not advocated for "maximum damage" in either Hebrew or English, instead explaining that "once the objective became to destroy Hamas' military capabilities altogether, the IDF made a strategic shift from focusing on exactly which Hamas targets to hit, to striking as many Hamas military targets as possible, with the aim of dismantling all of Hamas's military capabilities."

Hagari's words, it added, "had been selectively misinterpreted and misquoted to suggest that the IDF is focused on causing maximum damage to Gaza as a whole. This is blatantly false."

Even more fundamentally, analysis or explanation of Hamas's war-fighting methods is invisible in the report, giving the lie to the Commission's claim of being "independent." While it is true that Gaza was devastated in the war triggered by the October 7, 2023, mass atrocities, the lion's share of responsibility for that lies with Hamas. To admit to this truth, or to even acknowledge it in a footnote, would amount to a step too far for the Commission.

This ideological distortion runs throughout the report. It quotes an unnamed doctor who claims Israeli soldiers were "deliberately shooting teenage boys in a game of target practice," yet provides neither the doctor's identity nor the date of the visit and cites no source.

It ignores reports that Hamas prevented civilians from following Israeli evacuation warnings, treats isolated misconduct by Israeli soldiers as evidence of a national policy of dehumanization, and presents sweeping conclusions – including that Israel sought "to destroy the biological continuity and future existence of the Palestinian group in Gaza" – as fact.

Institutionalizing anti-Zionism

What is driving this endless stream of genocide accusations from within the UN is not a commitment to the truth, but a noxious anti-Zionist stance that dates back at least to the Soviet-backed General Assembly resolution of November 1975 declaring Zionism to be a form of racism.

LOUAI BESHARA/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Syrian Defense Minister Mustafa Tlass's 'The Matzah of Zion,' which revisits the 1840 Damascus blood libel affair, was used to attack Israel in the UN Human Rights Council. That blood libel is being revived.

PIER MARCO TACCA/GETTY IMAGES

UN Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territories Francesca Albanese frequently incorporates the basest antisemitic tropes.

The Commission is only one of several individuals and bodies carrying the UN's imprimatur that are dedicated to discriminating against Israel specifically.

To mention only a few of these, there is the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, created on the same day the General Assembly deemed Zionism to be racism; there is the fixed "Item 7" on the Human Rights Council's agenda dedicated to alleged Israeli violations alone; and there is the sprawling network of special representatives and special rapporteurs.

This latter group includes Francesca Albanese, the Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, who is the subject of US sanctions and whose incendiary rhetoric frequently incorporates the basest antisemitic tropes; and Vanessa Frazier, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, who attempted to shout down Israel's UN ambassador, Danny Danon, during a recent hearing on a separate UN report that placed Israel on a blacklist of armed forces who abuse children.

Moreover, the ranks of the UN's anti-Zionists may well be strengthened with the recent appointment of Pau Pérez-Sales as Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

A psychiatrist and a Spanish citizen, Pérez-Sales published at least two academic papers during the Gaza war that relegated the October 7 massacre to the sidelines while pushing allegations of "genocide" and other crimes, including systematic sexual abuse. Given his fixation with Israel, Pérez-Sales will be both a natural partner for Albanese and her potential replacement once her mandate comes up for renewal in May 2028.

A deadly theme first embraced by English peasants in medieval times has successfully traveled to the banks of the East River in New York City centuries later.

Blood libels, freed from the pesky truth, confirmed on October 7 that Israel's enemies seek to inflict "maximum damage" in their bid to eliminate the Jewish state, lie at the heart of the UN's strategy to weaken and ultimately punish the State of Israel. Mustafa Tlass would no doubt be satisfied. ■

Ben Cohen is the Director of Rapid Response at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

They don't have an answer for our joy

In an age of rising antisemitism, Jewish joy may be the one thing hatred cannot overcome

By Hen Mazzig

YOTAM SCHWARTZ

Hen and Marc at their sunset wedding ceremony on September 20, 2025, in Thira (Santorini), Greece.

RECENTLY, I announced a short documentary about my wedding. It's called *Uninvited*, and the wedding is almost incidental. The film is about a guest list and the strange arithmetic my husband, Marc, and I performed as we wrote it: crossing off name after name of people who had once been close to us, people who decided, at some point in the last few years, that they could no longer be friends with a Jew who declines to apologize for existing.

Marc never chose a public life. He fell in love with a Jewish man who came with a target on his back, and the target found him, too. We told that story honestly, grief included, because grief is now part of being openly Jewish. But we also told it as a wedding: two grooms under a *huppah*, breaking the glass, unembarrassed by our own tradition. Once the film entered the world, the response exceeded criticism by an order of magnitude. A film about two men getting married produced a volume of death threats I would not have believed had I not read them myself.

We had not published a political argument. We told a love story, and the love story was treated as the greater provocation. Why should a wedding enrage people more than an op-ed ever did? Because an argument can be rebutted or outvoted. A Jew living contentedly inside his own life yields nothing and offers nothing to seize. The fury this provokes is the fury of a worldview confronting evidence against itself.

Visibly Jewish

On July 4, I spoke at London's third annual Jewish Pride. The event is three years old because it had to be. For two years, there was no Jewish contingent at London's Pride; organizers would not guarantee our safety and treated the request for it as an imposition. The premise beneath that refusal was familiar: Jews may belong, provided we check the inconvenient parts of ourselves at the door.

This year, the Jewish bloc marched again, flags out, a few hundred Jews walking past thousands lining the streets. Some cheered. A few shouted.

Later, at a street party outside Miznon in Soho, one man screamed "Free Palestine" at hundreds of people dancing beneath Jewish stars and Israeli flags. He went hoarse. The dancing continued.

This is what Jewish safety has looked like across our history: the willingness to occupy a public square as ourselves, whether or not the square approves.

I know something about taking space that would prefer your absence. During Iran's attacks this spring, I was in Israel, running to shelters more times in a week than I could count. On Purim, in the middle of a war, I found myself in a parking garage-turned-shelter, where somebody's cousin had produced a speaker and a hundred strangers danced beneath a borrowed strobe light until the sirens released us.

The scene held a symmetry too neat for fiction: a holiday about a regime that tried to erase us, celebrated underground by people sheltering from a regime still trying. When I wrote about it afterward, the piece traveled further than nearly anything I have published. Readers recognized the oldest Jewish technology there is: defiance disguised as a party.

The same conviction animates my online series, *And They're Jewish*. I built it because every public conversation about Jewish identity had come to begin and end in trauma. My guests are artists the audience already loves, and they do not come on to discuss October 7 or the war. They come to explain why their Jewishness is a wellspring rather than a wound. That, too, turns out to be an answer nobody expects: no rebuttal, just visible joy.

Beyond defiance

Here is what this argument is not. Joy is not a strategy, and I distrust anyone selling the idea that the right framing will get antisemites to leave us alone the way other movements have learned to isolate their opponents. That playbook fails us because antisemitism differs from other hatreds in kind. It functions as a theory of the world, an explanation for whatever has gone wrong in a society, and it adapts with equal ease to Jews who are powerless or thriving.

You cannot shame a worldview into silence with a slogan; the entire logic of slogans is to compress problems into a line a crowd can chant, and history suggests who that compression tends to blame. So no, our joy will not convert the people who hate us. What it refuses them is the deeper victory: a Jewish life organized entirely around their obsession, a people shrunk to the shape of the accusation against them.

This is why I accepted the Oxford Union's invitation to debate last month, knowing what it would cost. I stood in that chamber opposite people who have built careers on the proposition that Jews are the last acceptable colonizers on earth, and I talked about my grandmothers: one expelled from Baghdad, one from Tunisia – refugees before the word "Nakba" had entered anyone's vocabulary.

I told the room that it did not get to vote on whether my family lives, and that I had stopped requiring its permission to exist. We lost the vote. In that room, we always do. But people found me afterward to say something had shifted for them. The arguing is not optional, however much it costs. It is for the undecided listener, quietly making up her mind, as much as for anyone in the chamber.

But the argument is the smaller part of the inheritance. The debates and the endless correction of the record are necessary work. They have never been what keeps the Jewish people alive. The mother raising Jewish children in a hostile city is doing enough.

The playwright writing a Jewish story with no antisemitism in it is doing enough. We cannot abandon the fight to persuade. Neither can we let it consume the thing it defends: the plain, stubborn right to live inside our own tradition, joyfully and on our own terms.

Our enemies have a thousand answers to our arguments. They have never had one for our joy. ■

Hen Mazzig is an Israeli-raised author and social critic redefining Jewish advocacy through his social media laboratory TLVi.org.

COURTESY

Hen Mazzig participates in an Oxford Union debate in June. The debate focused on the motion: This House believes Israel never truly wanted peace with Palestine. Mazzig spoke in opposition to the motion.

ELLIOTT FRANKS

Brodie Mitchell campaigning against Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps outside the UK prime minister's residence on Downing Street in London.

The Zionist exception?

UK students question universities' double standards

By Mathilda Heller

WHEN BRITISH undergraduate student Brodie Mitchell joked that a keffiyeh-clad student was "wearing a tea towel" on her head, Royal Holloway University suspended him for nine weeks and evicted him from his university accommodation.

Months later, Mitchell says he faced students who called him "a f***ing Jew," threatened him repeatedly by phone, and told him "we know where you live" on campus.

To Mitchell, who is not Jewish, the difference wasn't simply disciplinary discretion; it was evidence of something larger.

Contested spaces

Since Hamas's October 7 attack and the ensuing war, Britain's universities have become some of the country's most contested spaces. Encampments, demonstrations, and heated debates over Israel and the Palestinians have become commonplace, while Jewish students have reported a sharp rise in antisemitic incidents and hostility on campus.

Universities insist they face the difficult task of balancing freedom of expression with their duty to protect students from harassment. Yet some Zionist students say universities have increasingly applied different standards when complaints involve Jewish or openly Zionist students.

Mitchell's case ultimately went to mediation, with Royal Holloway agreeing to compensate him and remove sanctions from his record.

But his battles did not end there. He spoke to *The Jerusalem Report* about Royal Holloway's repeated failures to adequately counter antisemitic and anti-Zionist harassment.

"I was two weeks in [to university] when it all started, and since then I've become a sort of campaigner against antisemitism and anti-Israelism. But the double standards [I've experienced] are crazy," Mitchell said.

The tensions continued well into his studies. One case was in April 2025, following Hamas formally petitioning the government for de-proscription. When the Palestine Society of Royal Holloway promoted this bid on campus, Mitchell publicly challenged it and said he was threatened and attacked in response.

He reported the incident to police and the university, but said the students received only a no-contact agreement (viewed by the *Report*), while he was suspended for nine weeks for his keffiyeh comment.

Mitchell then recalled a separate matter, where, from September 2025 until January 2026, two pro-Palestinian students harassed him and his Jewish friend nonstop.

"It was up to 10 calls an hour every single day, even in the middle of the night. On one occasion, I also had a 20-minute call where they were being extremely antisemitic and making threatening remarks."

The *Report* independently verified the recording.

Mitchell passed the recording to the police and the university. The police chose not to proceed. Mitchell and his friend then successfully identified the two students and gave the details to the university.

"But the university already knew their identities. They told us they had managed to link one of the phone numbers to a student, and so they knew who it was all along. And they were never suspended. Even though I received just nonstop hate like, 'we know where you live, we're watching you, we're coming to get you.'"

No sanctions

The *Report* viewed communications from RHU to Mitchell informing him that the "cases are concluded, breaches of regulations were found, and sanctions are in place." There was no further detail regarding the sanctions.

Then there was the issue of Friends of Palestine president Huda El-Jamal, the one at whom Mitchell directed the keffiyeh comment during the Freshers' Fair.

The two signed a no-contact agreement in January 2026 (also viewed by the *Report*).

Despite this, El-Jamal made a public video on Instagram on April 23, 2026, (still online) in which she called him the “perpetrator of a racist Islamophobic attack” against her.

By making this post, El-Jamal breached the no-contact order, which mandated her to avoid all “direct or indirect contact with [Mitchell], including online contact such as posts on social media.”

“She should have been sanctioned immediately or suspended for that, but the university didn’t do anything at all,” Mitchell told the *Report*.

Sanctions against Zionists

“N.,” a final-year student at King’s College London, is also no stranger to being sanctioned for their Zionist activism.

The main incident involving N. was when they left a seminar and passed through a foyer where multiple groups were displaying large Palestinian flags. This was during Discover Islam Week on February 11, 2025.

They said that, in response to their political stance and affiliation, particularly in their role as a senior member of the King’s College London Jewish Society and due to feeling distressed by what they perceived as a one-sided and prominent display, they took out and waved an Israeli flag.

While there is no official KCL policy governing the display of flags, N. was accused of “offensive or abusive behavior,” specifically acting in an “intimidating or hostile manner” regarding waving the Israeli flag on campus. They were also accused of various other offenses (including calling out a lecturer for her alleged support for a proscribed terrorist organization), offenses that they deny.

As a means of disciplining them, KCL ordered N. to write 5,000 words, including at least 1,000 on why waving the Israeli flag was wrong. The *Report* read the charges upheld against them, the penalty required, and the final written essay.

In their essay, N. said they had no problem with the Palestinian flag as such, and that their “concern lies not with the existence of that symbol, but with the imbalance and context of its display on campus.”

“There is no shortage of Palestinian flags at King’s. They are displayed regularly, prominently, and without sanction across protests, encampments, events, and common spaces. In this context, displaying an Israeli flag is not an act of provocation. It is an act of self-defense, visibility, and resistance to erasure,” N. said.

OOK AT THEM!
STARVED
AND
TORTURED

Brodie Mitchell campaigning for hostages outside Houses of Parliament with former Israeli government spokesman Eylon Levy.

ELLIOTT FRANKS

Failed Jewish students

A King’s College London spokesperson told the *Report* that N.’s allegation “is entirely false, as waving a flag does not meet our threshold for misconduct.”

The spokesperson added that N. was disciplined for a “significant range of offenses, including the targeting and encouraging the targeting of individuals on social media.” Although N. denied the claim and supported it by showing their lack of social media, the committee ignored them.

“Across these observed proceedings, a consistent pattern emerged,” N. said. “Jewish identity, Zionist identity, or any expression connected to either was treated as inherently provocative. Complaints against Jewish students were pursued with intensity, while harassment directed at them often went unaddressed. Administrative language remained measured and procedural, yet its effect was silencing. To characterize the articulation of lived fear as “offensive” or “disruptive” is not neutral; it exerts pressure, isolates, and delegitimizes.”

Daniel Berke, a director of UK Lawyers for Israel, told the *Report*, “Many British universities have failed Jewish students while indulging lecturers and students who create a climate of hostility.”

“CST [Community Security Trust] recorded a 117% rise in university-related antisemitic incidents between 2022-23 and 2023-24. My firm, for example, acted for a student whose legal claim [the University of] Leeds settled after her essay was improperly failed due to anti-Israel bias. The lecturer responsible has remained in post. This is not academic freedom. It is institutional cowardice, moral bankruptcy, and a disgraceful betrayal of Jewish students.”

“One must question whether any other minority would be made to feel so unwanted on campuses,” said Berke, adding that “How safe Jewish students are at a university is directly proportionate to the courage, or unfortunately, more commonly, the cowardice of the vice chancellor.”

“Equal protection must mean equal protection,” N. told the *Report*. ■

N.’s identity was protected for their safety.

Britain's antisemitism crisis: A community on edge

Record hate incidents, political divisions, and fears of radicalization have left Jews questioning their place in society

By Lianne Kolirin

EARLIER THIS year, Britain's government adviser on terrorism labeled antisemitism a "national security emergency."

Jonathan Hall KC's warning followed a series of attacks fueled by anti-Jewish hatred, including a knifeman targeting two Orthodox Jewish men in broad daylight on the streets of Golders Green, a north London suburb with a large Jewish population.

A national emergency

Like many countries, Britain has seen a significant uptick in antisemitism since Hamas launched its murderous assault on Israel on October 7, 2023, triggering the protracted war in Gaza.

Whether or not it is a national emergency, antisemitism has become increasingly difficult to ignore. Last year, the Community Security Trust (CST), a charity providing security advice for Britain's Jewish community, recorded 3,700 antisemitic incidents, making it the second highest level ever – surpassed only by 2023, which saw 4,298 reports.

There is, of course, one stand-out event: last Yom Kippur, Jihad al-Shamie rammed his car into Manchester's Heaton Park synagogue before embarking on a stabbing frenzy. Two congregants were killed, and the attacker was shot dead by police.

Figures are not yet available for this year, but the overall picture is expected to be just as bleak. Golders Green has been targeted on more than one occasion this year; in March, three masked men set fire to four ambulances belonging to Hatzola, a volunteer rescue service. Other notable incidents include the attempted firebombing of a synagogue and violent assaults on Jews.

Meanwhile, newspaper headlines regularly report shocking hatred across a range of sectors – from health and education to academia and the arts.

Society divisions

Dave Rich, director of policy at the CST, told *The Jerusalem Report* that growing divisions in British society are having a far-reaching impact on Britain's Jews.

"The rise of extremism across the board brings with it heightened antisemitism, whether this is in national politics, on social media, or in the growing belief in conspiracy theories," he said.

"This plays out across society, which is why we are seeing antisemitism in workplaces, schools, hospitals, and other sectors where it has not previously been a problem. Rather than looking at different sectors individually, it is important to recognize that the role antisemitism plays in all types of extremism makes it a threat to democracy and to society as a whole, not just to Jews," he added.

Adrian Cohen, senior vice president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews (BoD), said there has been a "step change" since October 7, with antisemitic incidents now "off the scale."

The way the conflict has been "portrayed in such black and white ways has really poisoned the body politic in society here," he said.

"So many people who consider themselves liberal and progressive, who only have the vaguest idea of where Israel is or its history, just assume there's been a genocide. It's then quite easy to step from that to demonizing a whole community that's associated with the country that's allegedly committed the genocide. In that kind of environment, it's not surprising hate crime is going to flourish," he added.

Global phenomenon

What has also emerged since October 7, Cohen said, is that antisemitism is not confined to any one country.

THE WOMEN OF WORLD WAR II

Large crowds of people attend a rally organized by the Campaign Against Antisemitism, opposite Downing Street in Central London on May 10.

JUSTIN TALLIS/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

"A lot of the issues [faced by Jewish communities worldwide] are very common, particularly because of social media, which doesn't respect borders. So if you have an influencer like Tucker Carlson spouting controversial stuff in the States, that will come up on people's algorithms here," Cohen continued.

"Many of the tropes and the propaganda and the impact of influencers are very common, so therefore increasingly we find ourselves working with our European and other counterparts," he said.

The BoD, Cohen added, is part of the J7 task force on antisemitism, which brings together the world's seven largest diaspora Jewish communities under a secretariat provided by the ADL.

The overall picture may be gloomy, but there remain reasons to be positive, according to Cohen. Back in June, the BoD organized the country's first-ever Jewish Culture Month with over 160 listings, notwithstanding attempts to disrupt one of its events at the British Museum, which was regarded as highly successful. They have now won funding from Arts Council England to build on its success for future years.

"We are a resilient community," he said, adding that in some ways, the uptick in antisemitism has "deepened the sense of belonging" for British Jews.

Hope for change

Politicians are aware of this and are mostly keen to keep the community on side. In his resignation speech last month, Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer talked about having "ripped out the poison of antisemitism" from Labour, since he was elected leader in 2020.

There's no doubt he culled the party of its Corbynite roots, introducing a raft of measures to tackle antisemitism and providing extra funding for community security. His government also designated Palestine Action, a direct action protest group, as a terrorist organization.

Additionally, last month, his government pledged a £251 million funding boost to help police forces across the country provide better protection for Jewish communities.

"The work that Starmer did in tackling antisemitism in the Labour Party after he became leader has receded into the background a bit, but it was hugely significant and is very much to his credit," said Rich.

"This does not mean that antisemitism has disappeared from Labour completely – there will be people with antisemitic views in every political party – but it is not encouraged or accommodated in the way it was under [Jeremy] Corbyn, which is why so many former Labour members have ended up in the Greens or in Your Party, both of which are now displaying the same types of antisemitism as poisoned Labour during the Corbyn years," he continued.

For now, the focus is on the mainstream, with a new prime minister – its seventh in 10 years – taking replacing Starmer last month. Andy Burnham is the former mayor of Manchester, a city with the second highest number of Jewish residents and his appointment has put the community on tenterhooks following a recent "apology" he made over his party's early handling of the Gaza war. Among other things, Burnham said that "the UK was too slow to call for a ceasefire," and "we've got to do more to put pressure on the Israeli government."

This will have done little to quell Jewish nervousness about the government's handling of regular anti-Israel hate marches since October 7. Many feel extremism and hatred have been allowed to flourish.

Stephen Silverman, director of investigations and enforcement at the Campaign Against Antisemitism (CAA), told the *Report* the situation has become "untenable."

"There are only so many times that you can hear that 'there is no place for antisemitism in society,' given that there is clearly plenty of space for it," he said.

"For years we have been calling on successive governments to stop the hate marches from parading through the streets of our capital. They are ground-zero for the surge in antisemitism that we have been seeing and have disfigured our country. We have made submissions to a review on policing policy; these must be implemented," he added.

Another priority for the CAA is the "radicalization" of young people in Britain.

"Our polling shows 10% of young people have a favorable view of Hamas, that 14% of them believe it is wrong to class Hamas as terrorists, and almost one fifth – a terrifying 19% – of young people believe that the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7 was justified," said Silverman.

"There is so much to be done, and one can only hope against hope that with the upcoming change in political leadership comes a change in attitude towards tackling the worst outbreak of the world's oldest hatred in our lifetimes," he concluded. ■

South Africa's Jews feel safe, but increasingly isolated

While violent antisemitism is rare, South Africa's Jewish community says anti-Israel hostility, campus intimidation, and political rhetoric have created new pressures

By Batsheva Shulman

AS ANTISEMITISM surges across the world, particularly in Europe and the US, South Africa has also made headlines with the government's case at the International Court of Justice, accusing Israel of genocide and war crimes in Gaza.

Despite this stance, many Jewish South Africans say their daily concerns are shaped less by antisemitism and more by general crime – and that attitudes toward Israel are more mixed, and often more supportive, than outsiders might assume.

The Jerusalem Report spoke to members of the South African Jewish community to hear their perspectives on antisemitism, Israel-related tensions, and the challenges facing Jewish life in the Republic.

MICHEL PORRO/GETTY IMAGES

Ronald Lamola, South African justice minister, is seen outside the International Criminal Court after his government filed an indictment against Israel in January 2024. Jewish South Africans say there is a huge gap between the actions of the government and how the community feels inside the country.

The reality of antisemitism

Josh Schewitz, executive director of the Cape Council of the South African Zionist Federation (SAZF), feels that antisemitism in South Africa is often misunderstood and overstated.

"The most important thing to say is that South Africa, in terms of antisemitism, is actually quite a good place," he said. "We don't have many violent incidents of antisemitism."

Schewitz said that Jewish life in SA remained largely ordinary. In cities like Cape Town and Johannesburg, people "walk around... just going to school and going home afterwards," their Jewish identity is visible and not usually a major issue.

When problems do arise, he said, they are mostly concentrated in specific environments.

"It's mostly on [university] campuses," he said.

Schewitz pointed to isolated antisemitic incidents, including "a pipe bomb that didn't go off, thrown into the Jewish community center," though he stressed these were not typical.

Wendy Kahn, national director of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD), similarly said that Jewish life remains mostly comfortable despite increased tensions in certain spaces.

"We are not experiencing the same daily antisemitism that our fellow Diaspora communities are experiencing," she said, adding that "South African Jewry still feels comfortable to identify as Jewish, wearing kippot and Magen David necklaces without fear."

She referred to what she called the "kippah stadium test," where most Jewish South Africans still feel comfortable wearing visibly Jewish symbols in public spaces, including rugby and soccer stadiums in Pretoria and the Johannesburg suburb of Soweto.

However, she drew a distinction between physical safety and verbal pressure. "Discomfort, however, comes from the anti-Israel rhetoric and intimidation that we... are being subjected to," she said.

Beneath the surface

A young Jewish South African, speaking anonymously, similarly said that antisemitism in SA is rarely direct or openly expressed, but instead exists beneath the surface.

"The thing about antisemitism in South Africa is you will find it occasionally, but [it] rarely manifests as overt anti-Jewish hatred," he said.

He added that he has experienced antisemitism more in relation to Israel than Jewish identity itself, particularly in university environments. He described campuses as spaces where Israel-related debates can become hostile, including around Israel Apartheid Week, an annual pro-Palestinian campaign criticizing Israel.

He also noted that traditional antisemitic stereotypes still appear in some contexts, including ideas that Jews are wealthy or control money, although he said he has not experienced direct anti-Jewish violence.

Israel-related tensions

The young local said his greater concern was the changing tone of Israel-related debates, which he said often shift quickly from criticism of the Israeli government into antisemitism.

"What we find very commonly is there's this vitriolic anti-Zionism that... does go into the realm of antisemitism."

He said the distinction between criticism of Israel, anti-Zionism, and antisemitism was frequently blurred, often in subtle ways rather than through direct violence or acts of hostility.

"It's not just simple criticism of Israeli government policy, it's this passionate [vitriolic]… then it becomes antisemitic," he explained.

He described anti-Zionism as a socially acceptable cover for some people's antisemitism.

"It's almost like a mask," he said, suggesting that antisemitism had not disappeared from polite society but has instead adapted into a different form.

Schewitz added that political rhetoric often shapes perception more than reality. He described some political voices as "deeply anti-Zionist" and "more pro-Hamas than anti-anything," but contrasted this with broader society: "most South Africans... are either neutral or actually pro-Israel.

"There's a lot more rhetoric than there is actual antisemitism," he said.

Kahn also acknowledged that antisemitism has increased since October 7, stating that "antisemitism rose in South Africa by 630%," including a rise in violent incidents.

People are not leaving because they say, 'I can't be a Jew in this country'" but rather they'd say, 'my kids are unsafe because of violent crime

However, she added that "fortunately, these levels have now returned to their previous, pre-October 7 numbers of [around] 65 incidents a year."

Even so, she said, "the intimidation is ongoing," particularly online, in workplaces, universities, and civil society spaces.

Public support for Israel

The young Jewish South African said that many residents may support Israel but hesitate to express those views publicly because of possible repercussions.

"In South Africa, it's still quite unacceptable to be overtly antisemitic," he said, "on the other hand, it's actually very hard, and you have to be quite brave to be overtly or publicly pro-Israel."

He also drew a distinction between Jewish identity and public support for Israel. "I think as a Jew, I always felt safe. But as a Zionist, there is definitely a quiet, unspoken discrimination," he said.

He added that this underlying tension could affect Jewish people professionally and socially.

"If you were to... be publicly known as a Zionist in a corporate firm, that would definitely impact your career."

He stressed that this was not a matter of physical danger, but rather "a quiet, unspoken discrimination."

For him, antisemitism often operates through coded hostility rather than open confrontation. "I'd call anti-Zionism 'antisemitism's respectable coat,'" he said.

Schewitz said that some campus incidents are better understood as "microaggressions" rather than overt attacks, where individuals feel targeted in ways that are difficult to formally challenge.

Kahn said she has not experienced direct personal targeting, but has received "hateful rhetoric on social media" in her professional role.

A resilient community

As national director, Kahn said the SAJBD monitored antisemitism and used advocacy and legal action when necessary, including through South Africa's Equality Courts and Human Rights Commission.

She said the community benefits from strong relationships with Christian and Hindu groups, adding that "there are many in South Africa who support SA Jewry and Israel despite the hostility by the former ANC government and other vocal antagonists."

Schewitz similarly noted the strength of South Africa's Christian Zionist community, including organizations such as South African Friends for Israel, which engage in advocacy and education around Israel.

"We do have a lot of friends here," he said, explaining that nurturing these relationships is important because "the Jewish community is very small in number."

He added that while South Africa remains a deeply Zionist Jewish community, aliyah is often driven by broader push factors, including crime, economic concerns, and political uncertainty, rather than antisemitism alone.

"People are not leaving because they say, 'I can't be a Jew in this country,'" but rather they'd say, 'my kids are unsafe because of violent crime,'" Schweitz said.

Despite challenges, Kahn said South African Jewry remains "a well-organized and vibrant Jewish community," with a "hopeful feel" following the 2024 elections and the formation of a Government of National Unity. ■

Intersectionality – one path to antisemitism

How a theory of overlapping oppression became, for some, a framework for anti-Israel activism

By Neville Teller

FEMINISTES
ET QUEERS
AVEC
GAZA
POUR UNE
PRIDE

BASILE DUBOIS/HANS LUCAS/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Protesters in France hold a sign that reads FEMINISTS AND QUEER PEOPLE STAND WITH GAZA during the 2026 Suburban Pride which took place in Aubervilliers in support of LGBTQ people in working class neighborhoods in June.

A TIDAL wave of antisemitism has swept across the Western world in recent years. One of its more puzzling aspects is the bizarrely incompatible alliances it has fostered.

A striking case is the common sight of LGBTQ+ activists and "Queers for Palestine" marching in solidarity with Palestinian movements such as Hamas or Islamic Jihad.

They either do not know or they choose to ignore, that according to the law and norms of their fellow campaigners, homosexuality is a criminal offense, punishable with imprisonment or even death.

A similar pattern appears among some women's rights activists. They proclaim their solidarity with regimes or movements such as Iran or its proxy Hamas, whose gender policies are starkly anti-feminist.

Iran's legal system fuses patriarchal culture with rigid Sharia-based rules, producing discrimination and state-sanctioned violence against women, including lethal force over dress-code violations.

In this strange alliance, some left-wing feminist elements in the West are prepared to turn a blind eye to extreme misogyny, just as long as it is embedded in forces opposed to "Western imperialism" and Israel, condemned as a "white, colonial, patriarchal" oppressor.

This unnatural conjunction of progressive, left-wing activists with narrow-minded, homophobic, misogynistic entities is glued together by a doctrine that mesmerized feminist and critical race theorists in the late 1980s and rapidly captivated large parts of the social sciences world. It is called "intersectionality."

Origins of ideology

The term was coined in 1989 by the American legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw. She invented it to explain how black women's lives were adversely affected by discrimination not only by race but also by gender and how the two impacted on each other.

This basic idea – that one form of oppression actually influences another – appealed to sociologists. It quickly became an obsession, mushrooming to encompass the concept that every form of discrimination within a society against oppressed or disenfranchised groups is interlinked.

It did not require much effort to incorporate into these intersecting forms of oppression the old chestnut that – despite all the evidence to the contrary – Israel was an apartheid state dedicated to oppressing Palestinians.

As a result, the groups that considered themselves oppressed were led to embrace the Palestinians as fellow victims and to perceive Israel as part of the oppressive global power structure. In short, intersectionality soon offered anti-Israel organizations a fashionable and acceptable way of wielding the ultimate antisemitic weapon – linking every perceived evil in the world to the Jews or the Jewish state.

From the 2010s, intersectionality became mainstream in progressive NGOs, campus politics, social justice, and anti-fascist campaigns. Movements increasingly adopted an "intersectional" language of overlapping systems.

In left-wing circles, it became both fashionable and a matter of self-preservation to maintain, for example, that equal pay for women is related to Black Lives Matter or that climate change activism is inseparable from the struggle against colonialism.

And since left-wing opinion has decreed that Palestinians are quintessential victims and their villainous oppressors are Israel, dogma dictates that in opposing any form of discrimination, you must oppose Israel.

Your opposition must, of course, extend to all those who support Israel – which means the vast majority of Diaspora Jewry – and then, by a further extension, to all Israelis.

You must deny them a voice, ban them from public life, cut them off from academic interchange, and boycott or disrupt their artistic performances.

It is on the basis of intersectionality that the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement operates its anti-Israel and anti-Israeli campaigns.

Theory in practice

Pride Month events in the US and Europe supply clear examples of this frankly antisemitic thinking.

LGBTQ+ organizations regularly accuse Israel – the only state in the Middle East with a liberal approach to sexual issues – of "pinkwashing," that is, of cynically using its advanced LGBTQ+ rights to distract the world's attention from its alleged human rights violations.

In other words, nothing that Israel can do – even demonstrate its open-hearted support for liberal sexual politics – can outweigh the underlying antipathy toward the Jewish state.

NEILSON BARNARD/GETTY IMAGES

The term 'intersectionality' was coined in 1989 by the American legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw.

As a result, Jewish and pro-Israel LGBTQ+ groups have been harassed or excluded from Pride marches, while organizations that support Palestinian factions with deeply homophobic ideologies are welcomed in the name of solidarity with the "oppressed."

Groups and movements intent on putting intersectional theory into practice simply fail, or refuse, to perceive antisemitism as a rampant form of oppression.

None take into account that for centuries, Jews across the world were subject to discrimination and persecution.

Nor do they acknowledge that Zionism was the political reaction – a movement aimed at restoring to the Jewish people the right to determine their own future in their ancestral homeland.

It is heartening, however, to note that the intersectionality tide is beginning to turn. Some scholars have started to argue that it sidelines antisemitism.

Sociologist Karin Stogner writes that intersectionality, as usually practiced, shows a "tendency to exclude global antisemitism from its understanding of oppression."

She notes that movements guided by this exclusion – she names the Women's March, Chicago Dyke March, and parts of Black Lives Matter – have "excluded Jewish organizations and individuals from participation and take a vehement anti-Israel stance."

In one paper, she describes "strange alliances that occur between queer and intersectional feminism on the one hand and global antisemitism on the other."

Professor Christina Hoff Sommers has written: "Of course, intersectionality theory is a confused muddle. It fights racism and sexism by classifying everyone according to race and sex. It views race and gender privilege as the root of all evil while ignoring the role played by dogmatic ideologies held by all genders."

High among such "dogmatic ideologies," of course, is frank antisemitism.

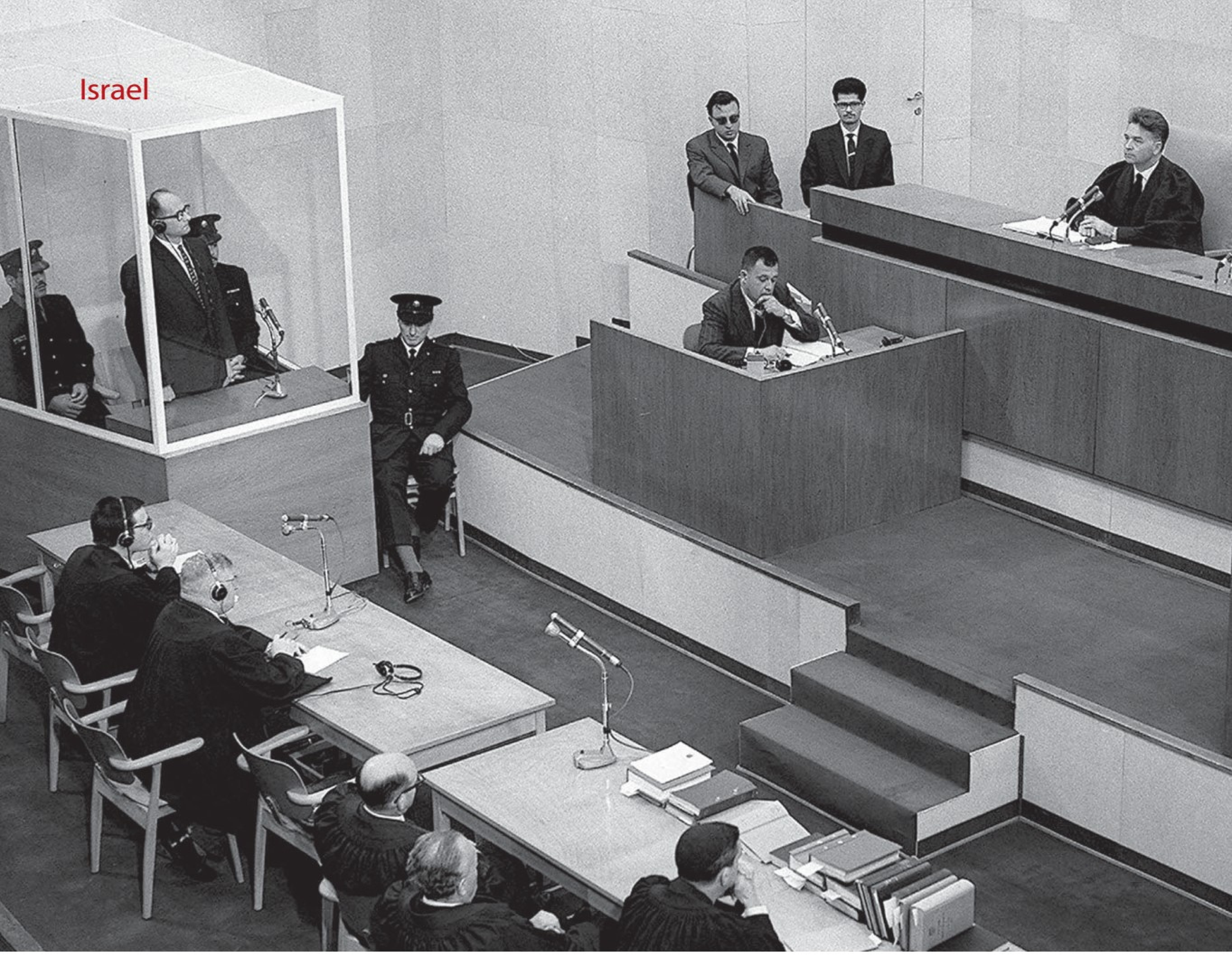
Even Crenshaw herself, some 20 years after devising the idea of intersectionality, complained that her concept had been stretched beyond what she intended.

She wrote that intersectionality was "originally meant to be a tool used to understand and frame the discrimination faced by black women in the United States," but that it had been "contorted" to become something that she never intended it to be.

No one could speak with greater authority. Crenshaw has asserted that intersectionality, as she conceived it, has burst its banks and flooded out of control.

Are its proponents at last beginning to perceive that the misguided application of its theories to Israel and the Jewish people is in part responsible for the uncontrolled expansion of antisemitism in the West? ■

Neville Teller is a former senior civil servant. Follow him at: www.a-mid-east-journal.blogspot.com



The Eichmann trail was held in Jerusalem, Israel, from April 11 to August 14, 1961.

The last Eichmann reporter

He watched Eichmann face justice, now he's one of the last who can tell it

By Lara Sukster Mosheyof

MORE THAN 60 years after the trial of Nazi leader Adolf Eichmann, and more than 80 years after the end of World War II and the Holocaust, many believed that antisemitism would already be dead. But it is more alive than ever, and Zevi Ghivelder, one of the only journalists who covered Eichmann's trial in person who is still alive, is here to prove it.

A Jewish Brazilian journalist, Ghivelder had to beg his editor to allow him to cover the trial, as he was still a rookie with only two years of experience behind him. As one of the very few Jewish journalists at *Manchete* magazine, he asked so many times to be sent to Israel for the event that his boss finally agreed, he told *The Jerusalem Report*.

Watching history

On the verge of his 27th birthday, Ghivelder was the youngest of the 200 foreign correspondents covering Eichmann's trial in Jerusalem. The proceedings began on April 11, 1961, a day Ghivelder said he will "never forget." His first memories of the trial sessions were of watching a German lawyer argue that Israel had no right to judge

GOVERNMENT PRESS OFFICE

Eichmann, since the state had no formal jurisdiction to conduct the trial.

The Nazi criminal was born in Austria, served in the German army, committed his crimes in Germany, Hungary, Poland, and other European countries, and then fled to hide in Argentina, where he was arrested. One of the most extraordinary aspects of his trial was therefore the decision on how jurisdiction would be applied.

For the first, and, to this day, the last time, a criminal was judged according to the jurisdiction of his victims. Since they were mostly Jews, and Israel is the Jewish state, Jerusalem was chosen to be the stage of the trial.

Ghivelder covered the trial sessions for six weeks, coming to know every corner of the courtroom and every expression on Eichmann's face. His conclusion was clear: there was no "only following orders" in the Nazi's deeds, but rather an "intention, meticulous and systematic organization for the slaughter of Jews in Europe," Ghivelder told the *Report*.

He highlighted something that not many people mention: Eichmann began attending to the "Jewish issue" in 1937, before the war started. That year, the Nazi criminal traveled to Israel, which at the time was still called Palestine, in order to see "what the Jewish people were doing there," he said.

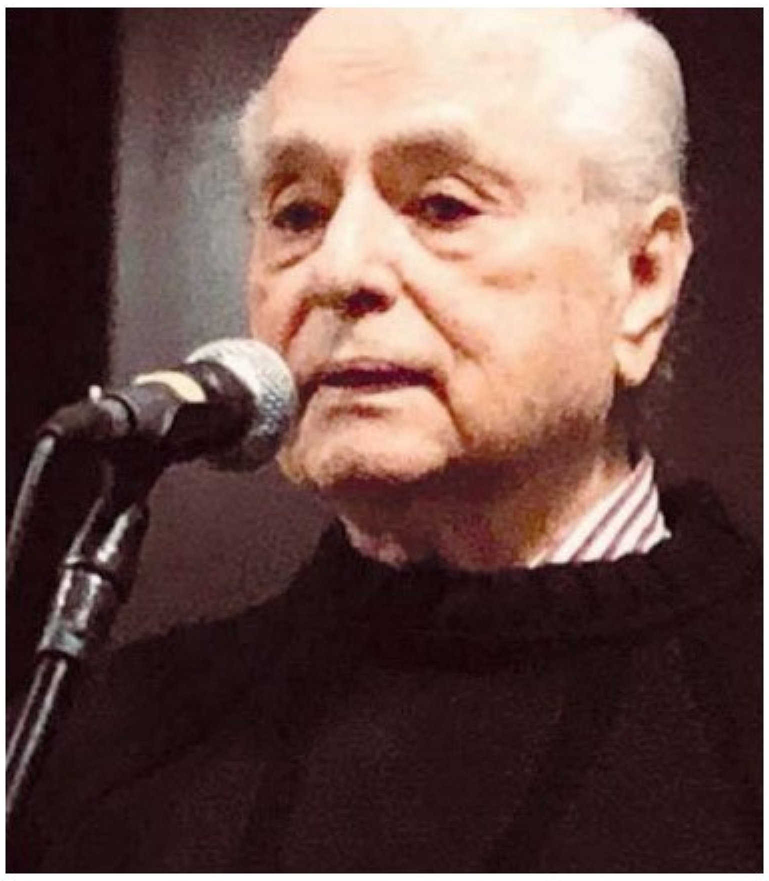
According to him, Eichmann was "well-versed in the Jewish subject," Ghivelder explained to the *Report*, adding that the Nazi criminal used to be fascinated by the Jewish dynamic in Palestine. Because he knew every aspect of Jewish life, by the time he executed the Final Solution, Eichmann knew exactly how, when, and why he was acting. "There was no banality of evil, there was a perversity of evil," Ghivelder said.

Ghivelder shared that, some time later during the trial, he came to know the officer who had arrested Eichmann in Argentina in 1960: Peter Zvi Malkin, of the Mossad. He noted that, after being arrested and brought to the car, Eichmann's first sentence was "you're from Israel, aren't you," proving that he knew the Jews were behind his arrest.

Regarding the interrogation, also conducted by Malkin, Ghivelder told the *Report* that the Mossad agent had shared with him that, while talking to Eichmann back in Argentina, he confessed to the Nazi criminal that his own sister and two nephews had been slaughtered in concentration camps during the Holocaust.

In response, Ghivelder recalls, Eichmann said to Malkin: "Ok, they died, but they were Jewish, after all," he said, emphasizing that the Nazi leader truly believed that the Jewish people needed to die.

Ghivelder relayed to the Report one intriguing aspect of the press coverage of the trial in the 1960s. The trial began on April 11, so one would have expected it to appear on the front page of every newspaper on April 12. But that was not the case.



COURTESY

Zevi Ghivelder, one of the last living journalists who covered Eichmann's trial in person.

"It was placed on the third, even fourth page. Because the world editor's choice was to place Gagarin's trip to space, since it was the first ever mission to space." Would that be a sign of antisemitism? Maybe, but we will never know, Ghivelder said.

Power of testimony

For him, the most touching moment was when the poet Abba Kovner shared his story with the public during one of the trial sessions. "He was one of the leaders of the Vilna ghetto uprising, and he told everyone about the story of the uprising. After he spoke, suddenly the world got to know that the Jews were not only passive regarding their slaughter during the Holocaust," Ghivelder told the *Report*.

The Eichmann trial remains, to this day, engraved on Zevi Ghivelder's heart and mind.

After watching, for the first time, dozens of harrowing stories told from the very mouths of Holocaust survivors who had seen death before their eyes just a few years earlier, the journalist learned a lesson: "the Holocaust survivors' testimonies, in my opinion, demonstrated to what extent human beings can degrade themselves to commit such a crime. I would say it is almost impossible to imagine a human being reaching this level of human degradation and inhumanity." ■

Back to Germany

Eighty years after the Holocaust, a record number of Israelis are reclaiming German citizenship – not out of nostalgia, but as a passport to security and opportunity

מדינת ישראל
STATE OF ISRAEL
ישראל
דרכון
PASSPORT
EUROPÄISCHE UNION
BUNDESREPUBLIK DEUTSCHLAND
REISEPASS
PASSPORT
PASSEPORT

BEN KAUSCHANKY

By Ben Kauschansky

GALIT BARY Weisberg always knew her family's history was complicated, but she never thought it would shape her children's future. Eighty years after her grandparents fled Nazi Germany for Israel, she did the exact opposite. The mother of three children – ages eight, six, and 2.5 – packed her family's bags and moved to Munich in September 2025 as a German citizen.

She is not the only one.

A record number of Israelis are reclaiming the German citizenship that was taken from their families during the Holocaust. What used to be a backup plan or a painful memory has now become a key source of security.

"It has been very hard for me since October 7, and it only got worse… I needed a break from Israel," said Bary Weisberg, an Israeli-German who works in the tech industry in Munich as a development manager.

"I can say that when we got the passports for my children, it was with the mindset of, 'Okay, we need to do this quickly because we are already leaving, so we need this insurance certificate for escape.'"

Yossi Harpaz, a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Sociology at Tel Aviv University, said what used to be an emotional or political choice has now become a practical backup plan.

"The demand for insurance certificates [i.e., a second passport] definitely exists, and buying them likely grants a person some peace of mind and a sense of security. However, we have seen an upward trend in recent years, which has accelerated since 2023 due to the constitutional crisis and the war," said Harpaz, an expert on dual citizenship.

A passport surge

According to the German embassy in Israel, 6,756 Israelis became German citizens in 2025 alone, double the number from 2021, making the embassy in Israel the biggest German passport office outside of Europe. Germany's Federal Ministry of the Interior shared numbers showing that the Hamas attacks and the ongoing wars in the Middle East caused applications to jump.

The vast majority of Israeli-Jews of German descent are eligible for naturalization as derived from Article 116(2) of Germany's Basic Law. This law said that Germans and their descendants who were stripped of their citizenship during the Nazi regime between 1933 and 1945 have the right to have it restored.

These numbers were also helped by a major change in German law. In June 2024, Germany eased the naturalization process for foreigners and allowed them to keep their original passports.

Tomer Amit, 31, a postdoctoral researcher in chemistry, moved to Munich from Ganei Hadar, near Rehovot, in January.

For him, the passport is a ticket to long-term career opportunities.

"There is a good chance that I will stay here since I have the citizenship and the language," shares Amit, an Israeli-German. Amit chose to do his research in Germany instead of another country mainly because he already has German citizenship.

A 2025 article in *The Guardian* reported that Germany is now home to the largest Israeli diaspora in Europe, with an estimated population of 24,000.

But some people worry that holding two passports makes a person seem less loyal to their home country.

"On the surface, it seems perfectly logical that dual citizens might be less patriotic or loyal than those with a single citizenship," said Harpaz.

"The rationale is that someone with only one citizenship has no choice but to stay, while a dual citizen can leave whenever they want. But I am not familiar with any research that has actually proven this. It remains an open question."

While Germany used to be viewed strictly through the lens of historical trauma, attitudes are shifting. A 2024 Israel Hayom article showed that 75% of Israelis believe that there is a "different Germany" today, compared to just 48% who believed in that statement in 1991.

'An immigrant like any other'

While the law makes getting a passport relatively simple, Harpaz said that the emotional choice is much harder, often causing disagreements between generations.

"On one hand, it can be viewed as disgraceful, unpatriotic, and undignified to go and request citizenship – or even to reside – in a country where I and my parents were persecuted," Harpaz explains.

"But on the other hand, just as previous generations survived because they had the right piece of paper at the right time – like a certificate to move to British Palestine – dual citizens argue that they need to stay sharp and read the writing on the wall in time, just like the previous generations."

Amit's own family history highlights this clash between generations. He explains that his parents decided to become Germans in secret.

"They told me to come along and not to talk about it with my family," Amit recalls, "because they were doing it without my grandfather knowing, as he was deeply ashamed of his German roots."

But for Bary Weisberg, her family had the exact opposite reaction.

"Within my family, it was never an issue," said Bary Weisberg, over a videoconference call. "Just recently, during one of her visits, my mother mentioned that hearing the children speak German with a German accent actually brings back pleasant memories of her parents, because they spoke German."

While a restored passport eliminates legal hurdles, it cannot erase the challenges of cultural displacement. The document grants entry, but not immediate integration.

"From my perspective, I am an immigrant like any other," said Bary Weisberg, who got her German passport when she was a child. "It happened a few times that I was asked for my passport, and then I showed the German passport, and then the people were confused… so I explained how I got the passport, and why I don't speak German."

This mass adoption of dual citizenship ultimately reshapes national identity. A German passport acts as an administrative key, but true belonging and assimilation require physical presence and time.

"Integrating into German society can definitely happen, but it requires living in the country," explains Harpaz, who has written extensively about the strategic value of dual passports. "If I have a German passport and now I've lived in Germany for 10 years, without a doubt my identity will change and I will start saying, 'I'm half-half.' The passport itself doesn't change much; what matters is living in the country."

For the next generation, this integration is already being fast-tracked through language and education, shifting away from historical stigmas.

"I'm not going at it full power, mostly because I don't know what will happen in the future, but I definitely want to learn German," said Bary Weisberg, 38. "My kids already speak fluent German. We chose to put them in German schools and kindergartens."

This forward-looking approach stands in stark contrast to the generational shame that previously surrounded German roots. When asked if he ever envisions a future where he introduces himself as being from Germany, Amit smiled.

"Yes. I see it, and I hope so." ■

This report was written as part of the 'Art of Journalism' workshop at the School of Communication, Reichman University.

COURTESY

Eighty years after her grandparents fled Nazi Germany for Israel, Galit Bary Weisberg, a mother of three moved to Munich in September 2025 as a German citizen.

COURTESY

Yossi Harpaz, a Senior Lecturer at Tel Aviv University, said what used to be an emotional or political choice has now become a practical backup plan for many Israelis with German citizenship.

COURTESY

Tomer Amit, who moved to Munich in January, is among a record number of Israelis reclaiming the German citizenship that was taken from their families during the Holocaust.

YONIT SCHILLER

New olim arrive in Israel with Nefesh B'Nefesh.

Before Israel felt like home

While young Jewish immigrants are welcomed at Ben-Gurion Airport with signs and ceremonies that make arrival sound immediate, truly feeling at home is a process

By Noa Jeifetz

BEHIND THE arrival barriers at Ben-Gurion Airport, a local ritual takes place daily as crowds holding handmade signs gather to greet returning family, friends, and new immigrants.

It is a warm reminder of what it means to come to Israel: to come home.

Galit Benzaquen, now 25, remembers seeing this tradition seven years ago when she stepped off a flight from Caracas, Venezuela. Despite the colorful welcome signs, the words felt like an unearned promise.

"I'm not going to lie, I did not feel at home," recalled Benzaquen, who is now finishing her BA in psychology at Reichman University. "My home was my home in Caracas."

Benzaquen's experience is not unique. For thousands of *olim* (Jewish immigrants), a border can be crossed in an afternoon, but psychological integration is a years-long negotiation.

For those in their late teens and 20s, aliyah (immigration) overlaps with the first years of adult life: university, work, roommates, and the practical labor of becoming independent.

According to the Aliyah and Integration Ministry, 21,900 olim arrived in 2025, with one-third between the ages of 18 and 35. The figures for 2026 have yet to be published.

For these young immigrants, home is not just where they land; it is where they must learn to build a life from scratch.

From there to here

While olim face the same core questions, their stories begin in different places.

For Micaela Sofía Pelenur, 25, the beginning was marked by hesitation. Arriving from Argentina in November 2020 to study at Tel Aviv University, she initially had no plans to stay.

"I didn't want to do aliyah because of a fear of commitment," Pelenur said. "But after two months, I knew I was going to become an olah."

By contrast, Matan Siegel, a 23-year-old communications student from New Jersey, found his place unexpectedly.

He came for a gap-year program and stayed to study at Reichman University, making aliyah after several years as a student. Like Pelenur, he hadn't planned on living in Israel permanently.

"I was a little homesick," Siegel said of those initial months. But over time, the country stopped feeling temporary.

The turning point

For Siegel, the turning point came after October 7. He was in the United States when the attack occurred. On October 31, he returned to Israel as rockets and sirens continued. Sitting in the car with his father before the flight, Siegel said he cried.

"This is one of the craziest decisions I'm making," he said he remembers thinking. "But I'm so proud that I'm making it."

Siegel spent his first weeks back in Israel volunteering on farms and preparing supplies for soldiers – a return that permanently altered his understanding of belonging.

"America is where my house is, but that is not home," he said.

For Benzaquen, the decision to leave was framed by the shrinking of Venezuela's Jewish community, which had plummeted from 30,000 to an estimated 4,000.

"The Jewish community identified with Israel, but it was not common for people to come live here," she said. "When I finished school, staying in Venezuela was not an option. If my graduating class had 70 people, only five stayed."

For Pelenur, Israel changed how Jewish life felt. In Buenos Aires, holidays had to fit around a secular calendar.

"Here, the whole city stopped for Yom Kippur, and all of Tel Aviv was dressed in white," she said.

Israel also gave Siegel a space where his identities could coexist. As a gay and religious young man, he found two worlds coming together unexpectedly at Jerusalem Pride.

"There are so many religious people," he said. "I didn't even know that many people existed that were gay and religious."

Integration frictions

Finding a home is also about preserving the life left behind. Prof. Tsachi Ein-Dor, head of the doctoral psychology program at Reichman University, describes this as integration rather than assimilation.

"In essence, you become multicultural," Ein-Dor explained. "You preserve the language and customs, and you don't lose who you are."

Benzaquen keeps that balance inside her apartment. While her outside life happens in Hebrew, her home remains a Spanish-speaking sanctuary.

"Being able to speak your language in your house is extremely important," she said.

COURTESY

Galit Benzaquen at her home in Herzliya.

For Pelenur, Argentina stays close through its absence. Phone calls cannot substitute for physical presence: "It is not the same as being there to give a hug or share a *mate* (South American herbal tea)."

For Siegel, small physical objects bridge the gap: "I have a couple of my posters from Broadway that I love. That makes it more homey."

The adjustment period can also make capable young adults feel suddenly dependent. They may arrive as adults, but language, government offices, and ordinary systems can make simple tasks unfamiliar.

Benzaquen remembers how a trip to the supermarket felt overwhelming: "Even going to buy eggs – there are 200 choices of eggs."

For Pelenur, the hardest part was government offices. "It brought me to tears because the bureaucracy is very difficult," Pelenur recalled. "It was only Hebrew, Arabic, or Russian. It was very frustrating."

Building roots

Marc Rosenberg, vice president of Diaspora Partnerships at Nefesh B'Nefesh – which operates in cooperation with the Immigrant Absorption Ministry, the Jewish Agency for Israel, Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael-Jewish National Fund, and JNF-USA – says organizations can help new olim find their first places to turn to, but they cannot create a sense of belonging.

Home becomes real through people.

Benzaquen said Israel started to feel different when strangers stepped in as a surrogate family. In Herzliya, after joining a group for lone soldiers, a volunteer helped furnish Benzaquen's empty apartment.

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Matan Siegel at Ben-Gurion Airport after making aliyah.

Later, her boss at a local pizzeria "was like a father," she said. "If I got sick, he brought me food."

Pelenur found her safety net built directly into Tel Aviv University through classmates and fellow Latin American students. "From the moment I arrived, I had people to guide me."

For Siegel, navigating the physical distance from his parents remains the hardest part.

"Friends are great, but it's not the same as having family," Siegel admitted. "But friends become more of your family here."

What stays

For Benzaquen, Pelenur, and Siegel, home is ultimately not defined by a passport, a welcome sign, or an address. It is not one moment and not one official document.

It is a mosaic of tiny realities: a language spoken in a kitchen, a friend delivering food when you are sick, and a roommate waking you up during a siren.

Benzaquen has now lived in Israel for seven years. She still does not know exactly what comes next. But the hardships are not her loudest memories.

"I am sure that I had like 1,500 moments in all these years when I said, 'I cannot do this anymore,'" Benzaquen said. "But I do not remember it that way. What stays with me are the good things." ■

This report was written as part of the 'Art of Journalism' workshop at the School of Communication, Reichman University.

Syria's diplomatic opening

Is Syria Trump's best chance for a Middle East diplomatic win?

By Dr. Eric R. Mandel

SAUDI PRESS AGENCY/HANDOUT VIA REUTERS

US President Donald Trump meets Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa during regional diplomatic talks on May 14. The Trump administration is weighing whether engagement with Damascus could produce a broader regional breakthrough.

RECENT CONVERSATIONS in Washington with officials at the State Department and Congress centered on the question: Where can the Trump administration achieve a meaningful diplomatic breakthrough in the Middle East?

With regime change in Iran no longer a policy objective, and with the MoU unlikely to meaningfully constrain the Islamic Republic's nuclear program, ballistic missile development, human rights abuses, or support for terrorist proxies, it is difficult to envision significant progress as long as the IRGC remains the dominant force in Iran.

In Gaza, Hamas continues to rebuild its military capabilities, while no credible international or Palestinian partner appears willing or able to disarm the group. As a result, the administration's realistic diplomatic opportunities have narrowed to two arenas: Lebanon and Syria.

Surprisingly, of the two, Syria may offer the more achievable path.

Lebanon presents an encouraging picture at first glance. Israel and Lebanon share no deep-rooted historical animosity beyond their longstanding security disputes, and their remaining border issues are ultimately negotiable. The current US-Israel-Lebanon trilateral framework even contemplates, for the first time, the possibility of eventual peace between the two countries.

The question is whether Lebanon's failed state can seize this opportunity to alter its trajectory. Unfortunately, the country's structural constraints remain formidable.

Two different paths

Despite suffering significant setbacks in its recent conflict with Israel, Hezbollah continues to dominate Lebanon's military balance. Its influence remains deeply entrenched across the country's political institutions and security and intelligence services, while many Lebanese fear the prospect of renewed civil war more than Hezbollah's continued dominance.

For its part, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) continues to regard Hezbollah as its most valuable regional proxy and the spearhead of its broader regional ambitions, making it highly unlikely to relinquish that strategic asset.

Lebanon's political system further complicates reform. The country's power-sharing arrangement divides authority among a Sunni prime minister, a Christian president, and a Shi'ite parliamentary speaker. Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri frequently aligns with Hezbollah's interests, limiting the state's ability to consolidate authority over armed groups.

Syria presents a different picture. President Ahmed al-Sharaa presides over an authoritarian system and serves as the country's central decision-maker, exercising considerably greater authority than Lebanon's fragmented government. However, independent local militias, tribal networks, and diverse ethnic and communal actors in southern and northeastern Syria continue to constrain Damascus's reach.

These constraints may still create a diplomatic opening, provided Washington is willing to invest sustained diplomatic and economic capital if Syria is genuinely prepared to move toward normalization with Israel.

The challenge is obvious.

Al-Sharaa's past includes leadership roles within al-Qaeda's Syrian affiliate before allegedly breaking with the organization. Some Israeli and many American officials view him as a pragmatic Islamist whose long-term intentions remain uncertain.

Can such a leader fundamentally change course?

Conditions for engagement

The Trump administration appears willing to give him that opportunity, easing sanctions and opening diplomatic channels before substantial reforms have materialized. Some Democrats have likewise argued that engagement offers the best chance to influence Syria's trajectory.

Caution, however, remains warranted.

Rather than offering unconditional support, Washington should insist on measurable reciprocal steps. The first test should involve Syria's treatment of its minorities. Kurds, Druze, Christians, and Alawites have all faced violence and discrimination by forces affiliated with the current government.

Before discussing broader regional normalization, the United States should secure verifiable protections for these communities and ensure they receive equitable access to humanitarian assistance and reconstruction funding. These would provide evidence that Damascus intends to govern differently from other Islamist regimes.

Whether Washington pursues such a strategy depends partly on how much diplomatic attention the administration is willing to devote to Syria, which currently ranks behind Iran, Gaza, and Lebanon on its list of priorities.

Ironically, Syria may prove the easiest arena in which to demonstrate diplomatic progress.

Recent reporting has suggested that prospects for Israeli-Syrian normalization before Israel's next elections remain limited. Damascus continues to insist that Israel withdraw from areas it occupied after Bashar al-Assad's government collapsed.

Israel should carefully examine what Syria may be willing to offer in return.

If negotiations merely produce another ceasefire or temporary disengagement agreement, the strategic value would be modest, as would any Israeli concessions. But if Syria is prepared for genuine normalization, including permanent non-aggression, economic cooperation, people-to-people engagement, and eventually diplomatic relations, the calculation changes considerably.

Such an agreement cannot require Israel to relinquish the Golan Heights, whose strategic importance has only grown over time.

The buffer zone into which Israel moved after the fall of Assad was established following the 1974 Israel-Syria Disengagement Agreement and presents a more flexible negotiating space.

Strategic calculus

I have visited Israel's northern frontier with Israeli military intelligence officers and spoken extensively with security and defense leaders about the security implications of Israel's current positions inside the buffer zone.

The consensus I encountered was noteworthy.

If Syria demonstrated a genuine commitment to normalization backed by robust American security guarantees, Israel could likely relinquish most of the forward positions it now occupies. The principal exception is the Syrian Hermon high ground, whose commanding elevation remains strategically important for Israeli intelligence and defense.

Some officials suggested that, under extraordinary circumstances and with sufficiently strong security guarantees, that position might also become negotiable.

Such discussions illustrate that territorial questions may not be the greatest obstacle.

The larger strategic concern is Turkey.

Any future agreement should include clear limits on Turkish military entrenchment inside Syria. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has steadily expanded Ankara's influence there, and many Israeli security officials increasingly view Turkey, not only Iran, as a long-term strategic threat.

During Israel's long campaign against Iranian military entrenchment in Syria, Jerusalem retained broad operational freedom to strike IRGC and Hezbollah assets. Confronting a NATO member embedded inside Syria would present an entirely different strategic equation.

This concern becomes more significant if Washington proceeds with advanced military sales to Turkey, including renewed access to sophisticated aircraft and defense technologies. Such decisions raise questions about preserving Israel's congressionally mandated Qualitative Military Edge, particularly given Erdogan's increasingly hostile rhetoric toward Israel.

Ultimately, Syria cannot be viewed in isolation from Iran.

As long as the IRGC remains the dominant force in Tehran, Iran will continue seeking influence across Lebanon, Syria, Gaza, and elsewhere in the Middle East. Any diplomatic achievements in these arenas will therefore remain vulnerable to Iranian efforts to undermine them through proxies and regional partners.

Policymakers must work with today's strategic realities rather than ideal scenarios.

The administration may initially focus on Lebanon because progress there appears politically attractive. Yet Lebanon's internal divisions and Hezbollah's entrenched power make meaningful implementation extraordinarily difficult.

Syria, despite its own considerable risks, offers a different possibility. A centralized government capable of making decisions, American leverage through sanctions relief and reconstruction assistance, and Israeli willingness to consider carefully calibrated territorial adjustments could together create an opening for genuine diplomacy.

After conversations with Syria specialists in Washington, one conclusion emerged: Normalization with Syria may represent the administration's best opportunity for a tangible foreign policy success in the Middle East.

Whether that opportunity can be transformed into a durable peace remains an open question. ■

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Is Washington falling into Iran's negotiation trap?

Every ceasefire offers Iran another opportunity to rebuild, while the West mistakes delay for diplomacy

By Danny Ayalon and Moran Alaluf

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ATTA KENARE/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Motorists drive their vehicles past a political billboard featuring US President Donald Trump and the Strait of Hormuz along Valiasr Square in Tehran on May 26.

IRAN'S STRATEGY is not an agreement – it is buying time for the purpose of continuing deception and building prohibited capabilities, the consolidation of the regime of terror in Tehran, the suppression of the population, and the destabilization of the situation in the Gulf and the Middle East in pursuit of hegemony.

Time after time, Washington appears to be falling into Iran's negotiation trap.

A ceasefire is meaningful only if Iran's actions match its commitments. Yet under the cover of the ceasefire, Tehran has used the time to rebuild capabilities, strengthen its proxies, and prepare for the next confrontation, while Washington continues to offer Iran additional diplomatic opportunities.

A similar pattern occurred in 2015 during the Obama administration, when the effort to reach a nuclear agreement with Tehran and the desire to avoid confrontation came at the expense of addressing other serious threats, including Iran's ballistic missile program and Hezbollah's global financial and criminal networks exposed through Project Cassandra.

What the West fails to understand is that this is not a business negotiation or a normal dialogue between states. It is a negotiation with a cunning and deceitful adversary, one that uses deception, manipulation, and every available tool to advance its objectives.

Iran is not driven only by strategic interests, but by a radical ideological and religious vision that places its goals above economic benefits or material interests. Washington often mistakes Iran's sophisticated chess game for rational behavior: Tehran uses diplomacy and deception to advance ideological goals that differ fundamentally from those of the West.

Negotiation illusion

The Middle East is once again approaching a dangerous boiling point. Despite two major rounds of confrontation between Israel and Iran, the mission remains unfinished. Rather than using periods of de-escalation to move toward stability, Tehran has continued to advance its capabilities, strengthen its proxies, and pursue its regional ambitions.

At this moment, the West must confront an uncomfortable truth: it has repeatedly returned to the same strategic assumption, that agreements, gestures, and temporary ceasefires will inevitably lead to stability. History, however, shows that this assumption can be dangerously misleading.

The fight against terrorism and aggressive regimes cannot be managed through a policy in which economic interests, political convenience, or the desire to avoid confrontation come before human lives and long-term security. The central question regarding Iran is not simply whether negotiations are possible. The real question is how Tehran uses negotiations once they begin.

While American officials continue to signal openness to dialogue with Tehran, Iran has demonstrated that it is unwilling to approach negotiations from a position of genuine compromise. Reports indicate that US President Donald Trump has expressed willingness to meet with Iran's leadership, including discussions involving Mojtaba Khamenei, while Tehran has refused direct engagement.

BENOIT DOPPAGNE/BELGA MAG/BELGA/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

The United States has continued to signal openness to diplomacy with Iran, while Tehran has maintained a confrontational posture toward Washington and its regional allies.

The message is clear: Washington is seeking a diplomatic opening, while Tehran continues to maintain distance and leverage.

Washington has even signaled openness to restoring diplomatic relations with Iran, including the possibility of reopening an embassy in Tehran. Tehran rejected the idea, claiming that an American embassy could serve as a tool for intelligence gathering and political destabilization.

Iran understands that time is its greatest strategic asset. The question is not whether an agreement can be reached, but how Tehran exploits the time it gains through negotiations and ceasefires.

Indeed, Iranian officials themselves have openly portrayed the current diplomatic process as an opportunity to consolidate their achievements, restore capabilities, and prepare for the next phase of confrontation. Washington should take them at their word.

According to reports, Iranian officials have warned that any failure to meet their expectations could lead to renewed escalation, while the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps has reportedly threatened further action regarding the Strait of Hormuz unless its demands are met.

The message from Tehran is unmistakable: negotiations are not replacing pressure tactics; they are being conducted alongside them.

The events surrounding the funeral ceremonies for Ali Khamenei provided another revealing moment. During a period when the United States was focused on major symbolic events, including the World Cup, Trump's birthday, and the 250th anniversary of the United States, Iran held extended mourning ceremonies in which threats against Trump reportedly appeared. Mojtaba Khamenei also vowed that revenge for his father's death would come.

Even when America attempts to lower tensions, Iran does not necessarily respond with restraint.

Deterrence matters

The United States must also ask itself a difficult question: if missiles had been fired toward Manhattan, Paris, or London for years, would Western governments have responded with the same calls for containment, patience, and renewed negotiations? Would they accept a reality in which their populations remained under constant threat while the international community demanded restraint from the victim?

The standard applied toward Israel cannot be fundamentally different from the standard applied toward Western nations themselves.

Iran's continued actions demonstrate the limits of a policy based on calibrated responses alone. The question is not only the scale of each response, but the message it sends to Tehran. When aggression carries limited consequences, an adversary may interpret restraint as a hesitation rather than deterrence. A cycle of provocation, limited response, and renewed aggression cannot create lasting security.

Israel learned this lesson painfully in Gaza. Years of tolerating incremental threats eventually led to catastrophic consequences. The same logic cannot be applied to Iran, a state actor with greater resources, regional ambitions, missile capabilities, and a willingness to continue confrontation even after suffering military setbacks.

Lebanown represents a strategic opportunity to reshape the regional balance of power. A stronger Lebanese state, progress toward regional normalization, and the expansion of the Abraham Accords would send a powerful message to Iran and its proxies across the region.

The ultimate objective must be genuine security – not the illusion of security.

A regime that seeks dialogue while maintaining a policy of threats and escalation cannot be treated as a normal negotiating partner. Diplomacy without deterrence becomes exploitation; an agreement may be a tool, but not the ultimate objective at the expense of security. Washington may be pursuing a broader strategy whose full objectives are not yet visible.

Ultimately, diplomacy must be measured by results on the ground. When an adversary repeatedly declares its intention to destroy you, the responsible choice is to believe it.

Iran's aggression and belligerence, and its violations of the Memorandum of Understanding, even though it was clearly to its advantage, prove the mistaken and weak position of the US, which granted Iran substantial advantages both in the nuclear sphere and in its military rehabilitation capabilities.

The US has not yet fully internalized Iran's capabilities for deception, the messianic and dangerous nature of the Ayatollah regime, and its extremism against any compromise.

As with Hitler and the Emperor of Japan in 1945, unconditional surrender is required, enabling the democratic and enlightened forces in Iran to rehabilitate the country and transform it into a peace-seeking state. ■

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Why Jordan has returned to the death penalty

The execution of six men convicted of killing security officers in June signals Amman's tough new approach to terrorism, drug trafficking, and threats to the kingdom's stability

By Dana Ben-Shimon

AFTER NEARLY a decade with no executions, Jordan sentenced six men to death for drug trafficking and involvement in radical Islamist groups in June, a move that has prompted questions about what led the authorities to resume capital punishment in the kingdom.

Although capital punishment is permitted under Jordanian law, the last time the country carried out such executions was in 2017. The government was prompted to end the years-long freeze after all six suspects were found guilty of killing members of the Jordanian security forces.

MARTIN BERTRAND/HANS LUCAS/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

King Abdullah II of Jordan. Analysts say that the return of the death penalty is intended to send a clear message of deterrence as the kingdom grapples with multiple internal and external challenges.

A red line

"For Jordan, killing security officers is a red line," Daoud Kuttab, a writer and journalist based in Jordan, told *The Jerusalem Report* in a recent interview.

"Crossing this line is considered a big issue that cannot be accepted, as these forces are serving the country and protecting the people of Jordan," he added.

Kuttab said that as part of a cooperation agreement with the European Union, Jordanian authorities had committed to not implement the death penalty. Following the executions on June 21, the Europeans responded with dismay and threatened to freeze a €250 million loan to the kingdom.

"The Europeans sought clarifications and wanted to know whether it was a one-time measure or if the practice would continue," Kuttab said.

While the move drew strong condemnation from human rights groups inside the country, it was widely welcomed by Jordanians, said Kuttab and other Jordanians who spoke to the *Report*. Multiple posts on social media platforms expressed broad support for the return of the death penalty sentencing.

"It's the right decision – 100%, yes to the death penalty," wrote Zuhair Ali Affaneh, a Jordanian citizen, on Facebook. Another, Anas al-Bado, echoed: "Those who dared challenge the state were executed. This is an excellent thing."

"I swear that enforcing the death penalty law is better than announcing salary increases for employees," commented another Facebook user named Sheikh Omar al-Gharaghir. "Yes, we feel immense joy, just like during our national celebrations."

"Islamic law is the law of justice: an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," said yet another Facebook user, Abu Ahmed al-Sardi.

Others agreed, further saying that there should be no mercy for those who endanger society by spreading drugs and weapons among the younger generation, sowing chaos and attacking security personnel.

"There is no compassion for these corrupted people and criminals who have taken the lives of the nation's sons, whether by killing or by using banned drugs that have destroyed younger generations," Faisal Hunaiti wrote on social media.

Deterring terrorism and trafficking

Ksenia Svetlova, a former Israeli Knesset Member and well-known analyst on Arab affairs, said the move was intended to send a clear message of deterrence as the Kingdom of Jordan grapples with multiple internal and external challenges.

"By turning to the death penalty, the authorities are showing they do not accept any attempt to undermine the kingdom's stability and are not willing to tolerate threats to its security," said Svetlova, who also serves as an associate fellow at the UK's Chatham House think tank.

"The aim is to warn those considering such acts that there will be a heavy price," she said.

Svetlova pointed to one of Jordan's main security concerns: the ongoing problem of drug smuggling along its northern border with Syria, a phenomenon that accelerated during the regime of president Bashar al-Assad and has persisted since its fall.

Despite steps taken by the new Syrian government to tighten border controls, Amman views those measures as insufficient. Jordanian security forces have repeatedly confronted armed groups and smugglers in an ongoing effort to secure the frontier.

The Jordanian government's official X/Twitter account quoted Prime Minister Jafar Hassan as saying that lawmakers will work to amend the law so the death penalty can be applied more broadly to major drug traffickers and smugglers collaborating with foreign gangs.

"The decision to implement the death penalty is linked to the killing of Jordanian security officers, not only about drug trafficking," Mustafa Zawati, an Arab writer and expert on Jordanian affairs, told the *Report.*

"Still, the broader issue of drug smuggling is a major worry for Jordan," he said, adding that there have also been discussions about imposing harsher penalties on drug dealers and traffickers, including prison terms of up to 30 years – effectively a life sentence in Jordan.

"For years, Hezbollah and the Syrians flooded the country with drugs, turning Jordan into a corridor for trafficking narcotics to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states. Criminal gangs continue to operate across the border, so the authorities are making efforts to combat this," Zawati said.

Attacks on security forces

Announcing the executions, Jordanian government spokesperson Mohammed al-Momani said the hangings were carried out after "all constitutional and legal procedures were completed."

Two of those executed were convicted of forming an ISIS-linked terrorist cell, bombing a security patrol with explosive devices, and engaging in armed clashes during a raid on the cell in the city of Salt in 2018, resulting in the deaths of six officers.

Another of those executed, Ibrahim Mansour Mohammed, was convicted in a separate terrorism case for the killing of a Jordanian officer in 2022. The remaining three were found guilty of killing security personnel during anti-drug operations.

"Jordanian authorities are worried about the possibility of ISIS groups spreading their influence within the kingdom," Kuttab said, explaining that the executions are intended to deter radical Islamists from threatening national security.

Svetlova said that Jordan has intensified its crackdown on radical Islamist activity, exposing networks and arresting suspects, a process that has grown in intensity since the start of the Gaza war in 2023.

"The kingdom is making efforts not to allow such groups or individuals to grow and is trying to curb their presence," she said, pointing to the regime's heightened sensitivity to public demonstrations and to jihadist and Islamist groups seeking to inflame public opinion.

Svetlova also highlighted what she described as the growing Iranian threat, saying Tehran has sought to destabilize Jordan by recruiting operatives and attempting to establish cells capable of operating against both Israel and the pro-Western Jordanian government.

Supporters of the death penalty in Jordan argue that a criminal who knows that he will be executed will not kill, out of fear for his own life, and on the day of the executions, the government said that a further 100 inmates are facing the same fate.

Observers said public pressure – particularly from the families of security officers killed in the 2018 Salt attack – helped drive the decision to carry out the executions, as images of the victims circulated widely and calls for justice intensified.

However, Svetlova pointed out that the effectiveness of capital punishment as a deterrent remains disputed. ■

SALAH MALKAWI/GETTY IMAGES

King Abdullah II of Jordan and his son Crown Prince Hussein receive European Council President, António Costa (2ndL), and European Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen during the first-ever summit held between Jordan and the European Union last January in Amman. The Europeans are disappointed with the new policy and have and threatened to freeze a €250 million loan to the kingdom.

A referee, a rumor, and Arab antisemitism

The lie about one soccer referee exposed how deeply antisemitic conspiracy theories remain embedded in Arab discourse

By Dalia Ziada

WHEN EGYPT was knocked out of the FIFA World Cup after a tense match against Argentina, the fury of many Egyptian fans did not stop at the referee's decisions. Within hours, social media users were accusing "the Jews" of manipulating the game.

Someone even altered the Wikipedia page of French referee François Letexier to falsely claim that he was born into an Orthodox Jewish family. The fabrication spread quickly, and for many enraged commentators it seemed to explain everything.

Israel had no role in the tournament. No Jewish organization was involved.

There was no evidence that the referee was Jewish, and nothing about the match required a Jewish explanation. Yet the instinctive answer for many was a Jewish conspiracy. That reflex is the story.

This episode may look trivial or absurd, but it reveals a deeper disease in the Arab political culture.

Antisemitism has moved far beyond hostility to Israel to become a ready-made explanation for defeat, humiliation, corruption, injustice, and national frustration. When reality is inconvenient, the Jew is summoned as the hidden hand.

An ideology emerges

Western discussions of antisemitism in the Middle East are usually reduced to the Arab-Israeli conflict, as if anti-Jewish hatred were merely a reaction to Israeli policy.

According to that view, peace negotiations, territorial compromise, or a change of government in Jerusalem would naturally drain antisemitism of its force. This is comforting. It is also wrong.

The Arab-Israeli conflict has undoubtedly intensified anti-Jewish attitudes. But in many Arab societies, modern antisemitism has developed into an ideology of its own.

It is not simply opposition to Zionism or merely anger over war. It's a worldview that portrays Jews as a secret force manipulating politics, media, finance, revolutions, wars, and even soccer matches.

The roots of this ideology are layered. Traditional religious prejudices provided an old vocabulary of suspicion.

In the 20th century, European antisemitic literature and Nazi propaganda entered the Arab world and gave those prejudices a modern political structure.

After 1948, Arab nationalist regimes and later Islamist movements absorbed and amplified these narratives, presenting Jews not only as enemies of Israel's neighbors but also as an invisible power behind the region's suffering.

Over time, this discourse became useful. It allowed failing regimes to evade responsibility. Military defeats could be blamed on Zionist plots. Economic collapse could be blamed on Jewish influence. Corruption, authoritarianism, social decay, and institutional weakness could all be explained without confronting the people and systems actually responsible. Antisemitism became not only hatred but also political anesthesia.

That is why it has survived so many political changes. Governments have fallen. Alliances have shifted. Several Arab states have normalized relations with Israel. Yet the image of the Jew as puppet master remains embedded in media commentary, political rhetoric, religious preaching, schoolyard talk, and online culture. The Egypt-Argentina incident was not an exception. It was a symptom.

Exporting antisemitism

The danger no longer stops at the borders of the Middle East. Over the past three decades, satellite television, transnational Islamist movements, migration, campus activism, and digital platforms have carried these narratives into Europe and North America.

After the October 7 attacks, Western societies saw an alarming normalization of anti-Jewish slogans, conspiracy theories, and intimidation of Jewish communities.

These trends have many sources, including far-right extremism and radical-left

RICHARD SELLERS/SPORTSPHOTO/ALLSTAR VIA GETTY IMAGES

Mohamed Salah and teammates of Egypt complain to referee Francois Letexier during the FIFA World Cup 2026 Round of 16 match between Argentina and Egypt on July 7.

MOHAMED ABDEL GHANY/REUTERS

Fans make an anti-racism gesture as they gather to welcome Egypt's national soccer team at El Alamein International Airport upon its return. Their defeat sparked a wave of conspiracy theories on social media blaming Jews for the result.

anti-Zionism. But one source is still too rarely named: the antisemitic discourse that grew inside modern Arab political culture and then migrated into global activist networks.

Naming this source does not mean treating every criticism of Israel as antisemitic. It does not excuse anti-Muslim bigotry. It does not minimize the threat of white supremacist antisemitism.

On the contrary, serious analysis requires moral clarity in all directions. But moral clarity also requires refusing to ignore antisemitism when it comes wrapped in the language of anti-imperialism, anti-Zionism, resistance, or social justice.

For too long, the study of antisemitism has been divided into familiar categories: European antisemitism, the legacy of the Holocaust, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These are essential but incomplete.

They do not fully explain why a soccer referee can be transformed overnight into a Jewish conspirator or why Jewish students in Western democracies are increasingly asked to answer for events they did not cause and governments they do not control.

To understand today's global antisemitism, policy-makers, educators, and civil society leaders must examine how anti-Jewish ideas were cultivated in the modern Arab world, how they were legitimized by regimes and movements, and how they now circulate through digital and activist ecosystems far beyond the region.

The Middle East is not only a theater of conflict. It is also a producer of political ideas, including destructive ones.

Ignoring this reality leaves the world fighting the symptoms of contemporary antisemitism while overlooking one of its most influential ideological sources.

The lie about the referee was quickly removed from Wikipedia. The worldview that made it believable remains much harder to delete. ■

The writer is a research fellow and Washington, DC, coordinator at the Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy.

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